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# GROWTH AND STRUCTURE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

BY

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# CONTENTS.

	Page
<b>Chapter I</b>	
<b>Preliminary Sketch . . . . .</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter II</b>	
<b>The Beginnings . . . . .</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Chapter III</b>	
<b>Old English . . . . .</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Chapter IV</b>	
<b>The Scandinavians . . . . .</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Chapter V</b>	
<b>The French . . . . .</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Chapter VI</b>	
<b>Latin and Greek . . . . .</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>Chapter VII</b>	
<b>Various Sources . . . . .</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>Chapter VIII</b>	
<b>Native Resources . . . . .</b>	<b>149</b>
<b>Chapter IX</b>	
<b>Grammar . . . . .</b>	<b>168</b>
<b>Chapter X</b>	
<b>Shakespeare and the Language of Poetry . . . . .</b>	<b>199</b>
<b>Chapter XI</b>	
<b>Conclusion . . . . .</b>	<b>222</b>
<b>Phonetic Symbols. Abbreviations. . . . .</b>	<b>235</b>
<b>Index . . . . .</b>	<b>236</b>

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## PREFACE.

The scope and plan of this volume have been set forth in the introductory paragraph. I have endeavoured to write at once popularly and so as to be of some profit to the expert philologist. In some cases I have advanced new views without having space enough to give all my reasons for deviating from commonly accepted theories, but I hope to find an opportunity in future works of a more learned character to argue out the most debatable points.

I owe more than I can say to numerous predecessors in the fields of my investigations, most of all to the authors of the *New English Dictionary*. The dates given for the first and last appearance of a word are nearly always taken from that splendid monument of English scholarship, and it is hardly necessary to warn the reader not to take these dates too literally. When I say, for instance, that *fenester* was in use from 1290 to 1548, I do not mean to say that the word was actually heard for the first and for the last time in those two years, but only that no earlier or later quotations have been discovered by the painstaking authors of that dictionary.

I have departed from a common practice in retaining the spelling of all authors quoted. I see no reason why in so many English editions of Shakespeare the spelling is modernized while in quotations from other Elizabethan authors the old spelling is followed. Quotations from Shakespeare are here regularly given in the spelling of the First Folio (1623). The only point where, for the convenience of modern readers, I regulate the old usage, is with regard to capital letters and *u*, *v*, *i*, *j*, printing, for instance, *us* and *love* instead

of *vs* and *loue*. — To avoid misunderstandings, I must here expressly state that by Old English (OE.) I always understand the language before 1150, still often termed Anglo-Saxon.

As for the philosophy of speech underlying this book I may refer the reader to three recent books, "Language, its Nature, Development and Origin" (London, G. Allen & Unwin, 1922, German translation, "Die Sprache, ihre Natur, Entwicklung und Entstehung", Heidelberg, C. Winter, 1925), "The Philosophy of Grammar" (London, G. Allen & Unwin, 1924), and "Mankind, Nation and Individual" (Oslo, H. Aschehoug & Co., 1925). I have dealt with English grammar in the four volumes of "Modern English Grammar" (MEG., Heidelberg) and in the shorter "Essentials of English Grammar" (London).

The ninth edition has been carefully revised and brought up to date. The changes concern chiefly chapters VII (which has been made into two, VII and VIII) and VIII (which is now IX).

For some valuable suggestions I am much obliged to Professor R. Hittmair of Vienna.

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O. J.

## *Chapter I.*

### **Preliminary Sketch.**

1. It will be my endeavour in this volume to characterize the chief peculiarities of the English language, and to explain the growth and significance of those features in its structure which have been of permanent importance. The older stages of the language, interesting as their study is, will be considered only in so far as they throw light either directly or by way of contrast on the main characteristics of present-day English, and an attempt will be made to connect the teachings of linguistic history with the chief events in the general history of the English people so as to show their mutual bearings on each other and the relation of language to national character. The knowledge that the latter conception is a very difficult one to deal with scientifically, as it may easily tempt one into hasty generalizations, should make us wary, but not deter us from grappling with problems which are really both interesting and important. My plan will be, first to give a rapid sketch of the language of our own days, so as to show how it strikes a foreigner—a foreigner who has devoted much time to the study of English, but who feels that in spite of all his efforts he is only able to look at it as a foreigner does, and not exactly as a native would—and then in the following chapters to enter more deeply into the history of the language in order to describe its first shape, to trace the various foreign influences it has undergone, and to give an account of its own inner growth.



2. It is, of course, impossible to characterize a language in one formula; languages, like men, are too composite to have their whole essence summed up in one short expression. Nevertheless, there is one expression that continually comes to my mind whenever I think of the English language and compare it with others. It seems to me positively and expressly *masculine*, it is the language of a grown-up man and has very little childish or feminine about it. A great many things go together to produce and to confirm that impression, things phonetical, grammatical, and lexical, words and turns that are found, and words and turns that are not found, in the language. In dealing with the English language one is often reminded of the characteristic English hand-writing; just as an English lady will nearly always write in a manner that in any other country would only be found in a man's hand, in the same manner the language is more manly than any other language I know.

3. First I shall mention the sound system. The English consonants are well defined; voiced and voiceless consonants stand over against each other in neat symmetry, and they are, as a rule, clearly and precisely pronounced. You have none of those indistinct or half-slurred consonants that abound in Danish, for instance (such as those in *hæde*, *hæge*, *lævig*) where you hardly know whether it is a consonant or a vowel-glide that meets the ear. The only thing that might be compared to this in English, is the *r* when not followed by a vowel, but then this has really given up definitely all pretensions to the rank of a consonant, and is (in the pronunciation of the South of England) either frankly a vowel (as in *here*) or else nothing at all (in *hart*, etc.). Each English consonant belongs distinctly to its own type, a *t* is a *t*, and a *k* is a *k*, and there an end. There is much less modification of a consonant by the surrounding vowels than in some other languages, thus none of that palatalization of consonants which gives an insinuating grace to such languages as Russian.

The vowel sounds, too, are comparatively independent of their surroundings, and in this respect the language now has deviated widely from the character of Old English and has become more clear-cut and distinct in its phonetic structure, although, to be sure, the diphthongization of most long vowels (in *ale*, *whole*, *eel*, *who*, phonetically *eil*, *houl*, *ɪl*, *huw*) counteracts in some degree this impression of neatness and evenness.

4. Besides these characteristics, the full nature of which cannot, perhaps, be made intelligible to any but those familiar with phonetic research, but which are still felt more or less instinctively by everybody hearing the language spoken, there are other traits whose importance can with greater ease be made evident to anybody possessed of a normal ear.

5. To bring out clearly one of these points I select at random, by way of contrast, a passage from the language of Hawaii: 'I kona hiki ana aku ilaila ua hookipa ia mai la oia me ke aloha pumehana loa.' Thus it goes on, no single word ends in a consonant, and a group of two or more consonants is never found. Can any one be in doubt that even if such a language sound pleasantly and be full of music and harmony, the total impression is childlike and effeminate? You do not expect much vigour or energy in a people speaking such a language; it seems adapted only to inhabitants of sunny regions where the soil requires scarcely any labour on the part of man to yield him everything he wants, and where life therefore does not bear the stamp of a hard struggle against nature and against fellow-creatures. In a lesser degree we find the same phonetic structure in such languages as Italian and Spanish; but how different are our Northern tongues. English has no lack of words ending in two or more consonants, —I am speaking, of course, of the pronunciation, not of the spelling—*age*, *hence*, *wealth*, *tent*, *tempt*, *tempts*, *months*, *helped*, *feasts*, etc. etc., and thus requires, as well as presupposes, no little energy on the part of the speakers. That many suchlike consonant groups do not

tend to render the language beautiful, one is bound readily to concede; however, it cannot be pretended that their number in English is great enough to make the language harsh or rough. While the fifteenth century greatly increased the number of consonant groups by making the *e* mute in *monthes*, *helped*, etc., the following centuries, on the contrary, lightened such groups as *-ght* in *night*, *thought* (where the 'back-open' consonant as German *ch* is still spoken in Scotch) and the initial *kn-*, *gn-* in *know*, *gnaw*, etc. Note also the disappearance of *l* in *alms*, *folk*, etc., and of *r* in *hard*, *court*, etc.; the final consonant groups have also been simplified in *comb* and the other words in *-mb* (whereas *b* has been retained in *timber*) and in the exactly parallel group *-ng*, for instance in *strong*, where now only one consonant is heard after the vowel, a consonant partaking of the nature of *n* and of *g*, but identical with neither of them; formerly it was followed by a real *g*, which has been retained in *stronger*.

6. In the first ten stanzas of Tennyson's 'Locksley Hall', three hundred syllables, we have only thirty-three words ending in two consonants, and two ending in three, certainly no excessive number, especially if we take into account the nature of the groups, which are nearly all of the easiest kind (*-dz*: comrades, Pleiads; *-mz*: gleams, comes; *-nz*: robin's, man's, turns; *-ns*: distance, science; *-ks*: overlooks; *-ts*: gets, thoughts; *-kts*: tracts, cataracts; *-zd*: reposed, closed; *-st*: rest, West, breast, crest; *-ft*: burnish'd; *-nd*: sound, around, moorland, behind, land; *-nt*: want, casement, went, present; *-ld*: old, world; *-lt*: result; *-lf*: himself; *-pt*: dipt). Thus, we may perhaps characterize English, phonetically speaking, as possessing male energy, but not brutal force. The accentual system points in the same direction, as will be seen below (26—28).

7. The Italians have a pointed proverb: 'Le parole son femmine e i fatti son maschi.' If briefness, conciseness and terseness are characteristic of the style of men, while women as a rule are not such economizers

of speech, English is more masculine than most languages. We see this in a great many ways. In grammar it has got rid of a great many superfluities found in earlier English as well as in most cognate languages, reducing endings, etc., to the shortest forms possible and often doing away with endings altogether. Where German has, for instance, *alle diejenigen wilden tiere, die dort leben*, so that the plural idea is expressed in each word separately (apart, of course, from the adverb), English has *all the wild animals that live there*, where *all*, the article, the adjective, and the relative pronoun are alike incapable of receiving any mark of the plural number; the sense is expressed with the greatest clearness imaginable, and all the unstressed endings *-e* and *-en*, which make most German sentences so drawling, are avoided.

8. Rimes based on correspondence in the last syllable only of each line (as *bet*, *set*; *laid*, *shade*) are termed male rimes, as opposed to feminine rimes, where each line has two corresponding syllables, one strong and one weak (as *better*, *setter*; *lady*, *shady*). It is true that these names, which originated in France, were not at first meant to express any parallelism with the characteristics of the two sexes, but arose merely from the grammatical fact that the weak *-e* was the ending of the feminine gender (*grande*, etc.). But the designations are not entirely devoid of symbolic significance; there is really more of abrupt force in a word that ends with a strongly stressed syllable, than in a word where the maximum of force is followed by a weak ending. 'Thanks' is harsher and less polite than the two-syllabled 'thank you'. English has undoubtedly gained in force, what it has possibly lost in elegance, by reducing so many words of two syllables to monosyllables. If it had not been for the great number of long foreign, especially Latin, words, English would have approached

the state of such monosyllabic languages as Chinese. Now one of the best Chinese scholars, G. v. d. Gabelentz, somewhere remarks that an idea of the condensed power of the monosyllabism found in old Chinese may be gathered from Luther's advice to a preacher 'Geh rasch 'nauf, tu's Maul auf, hör bald auf'. He might with equal justice have reminded us of many English sentences. 'First come first served' is much more vigorous than the French 'premier venu, premier moulu' or 'le premier venu engrène', the German 'Wer zuerst kommt, mahlt zuerst' and especially than the Danish 'den der kommer først til mølle, får først malet'. Compare also 'no cure, no pay', 'haste makes waste, and waste makes want', 'live and learn', 'Love no man: trust no man: speak ill of no man to his face; nor well of any man behind his back' (Ben Jonson), 'to meet, to know, to love, and then to part' (Coleridge), 'Then none were for the party; Then all were for the state; Then the great man help'd the poor, And the poor man loved the great' (Macaulay).

9. It will be noticed, however, — and the quotations just given serve to exemplify this, too — that it is not every collocation of words of one syllable that produces an effect of strength, for a great many of the short words most frequently employed are not stressed at all and therefore impress the ear in nearly the same way as prefixes and suffixes do. There is nothing particularly vigorous in the following passage from a modern novel: 'It was as if one had met part of one's self one had lost for a long time', and in fact most people hearing it read aloud would fail to notice that it consisted of nothing but one-syllable words. Such sentences are not at all rare in colloquial prose, and even in poetry they are found oftener than in most languages, for instance: —

And there a while it bode; and if a man  
Could touch or see it, he was heal'd at once,  
By faith, of all his ills.

(Tennyson, *The Holy Grail*.)

But then, the weakness resulting from many small connecting words is to some extent compensated in English by the absence of the definite article in a good many cases where other languages think it indispensable, e. g. 'Merry Old England', 'Heaven and Earth'; 'life is short'; 'dinner is ready'; 'school is over'; 'I saw him at church', and this peculiarity delivers the language from a number of those short 'empty words', which when accumulated cannot fail to make the style somewhat weak and prolix.

10. Business-like shortness is also seen in such convenient abbreviations of sentences as abound in English, for instance, 'While fighting in Germany he was taken prisoner' (= while he was fighting). 'He would not answer when spoken to.' 'To be left till called for.' 'Once at home, he forgot his fears.' 'We had no idea what to do.' 'Did they run? Yes, I made them' (= made them run). 'Shall you play tennis to-day? Yes, we are going to. I should like to, but I can't.' 'Dinner over, he left the house.' Such expressions remind one of the abbreviations used in telegrams; they are syntactical correspondencies to the morphological shortenings that are also of such frequent occurrence in English: *cab* for *cabriolet*, *bus* for *omnibus*, *photo* for *photograph*, *phone* for *telephone*, and innumerable others.

11. This cannot be separated from a certain sobriety in expression. As an Englishman does not like to use more words or more syllables than are strictly necessary, so he does not like to say more than he can stand to. He dislikes strong or hyperbolical expressions of approval or admiration; 'that isn't half bad' or 'she is rather good-looking' are often the highest praises you can draw out of him, and they not seldom express the same warmth of feeling that makes a Frenchman ejaculate his 'charmant' or 'ravissante' or 'adorable'. German *kolossal* or *fabelhaft* can often be correctly rendered by English *great* or *biggish*, and where a Frenchman uses his adverbs *extrêmement* or *infini-*

ment, an Englishman says only *very* or *rather* or *pretty*. 'Quelle horreur!' is 'That's rather a nuisance'. 'Je suis ravi de vous voir' is 'Glad to see you', etc. An Englishman does not like to commit himself by being too enthusiastic or too distressed, and his language accordingly grows sober, too sober perhaps, and even barren when the object is to express emotions. There is in this trait a curious mixture of something praiseworthy, the desire to be strictly true without exaggerating anything or promising more than you can perform, and on the other hand of something blameworthy, the idea that it is affected, or childish and effeminate, to give vent to one's feelings, and the fear of appearing ridiculous by showing strong emotions. But this trait is certainly found more frequently in men than in women, so I may be allowed to add this feature of the English language to the signs of masculinity I have collected.

12. Those who use many strong words to express their likes or dislikes will generally also make an extensive use of another linguistic appliance, namely violent changes in intonation. Their voices will now suddenly rise to a very high pitch and then as suddenly fall to low tones. An excessive use of this emotional tonic accent is characteristic of many savage nations; in Europe it is found much more in Italy than in the North. In each nation it seems as if it were more employed by women than by men. Now, it has often been observed that the English speak in a more monotonous way than most other nations, so that an extremely slight rising or lowering of the tone indicates what in other languages would require a much greater interval. 'Les Anglais parlent extrêmement bas', says H. Taine (*Notes sur l'Angleterre*, p. 66). 'Une société italienne, dans laquelle je me suis fourvoyé par hasard, m'a positivement étourdi; je m'étais habitué à ce ton modéré des voix anglaises.' Even English ladies are in this respect more restrained than many men belonging to other nations:

'She had the low voice of your English dames,  
Unused, it seems, to need rise half a note  
To catch attention.'

(Mrs. Browning, *Aurora Leigh* p. 91)<sup>1</sup>

**13.** If we turn to other provinces of the language we shall find our impression strengthened and deepened.

It is worth observing, for instance, how few diminutives the language has and how sparingly it uses them. English in this respect forms a strong contrast to Italian with its *-ino* (*ragazzino*, *fratellino*, originally a double diminutive), *-ina* (*donnina*), *-etto* (*giovinetto*), *-etta* (*oretta*), *-ello*, *-ella* (*asinello*, *storiella*) and other endings, German with its *-chen* and *-lein*, especially South German with its *-le*, *-el*, *-erl*, Dutch with its *-je*, Russian, Magyar, and Basque with their various endings. Too frequent a recurrence of these endings without any apparent necessity tends to produce the impression that the speakers are innocent, childish, genial beings with no great business capacities or seriousness in life. But in English there are very few of these fondling-endings; *-let* is in the first place a comparatively modern ending, very few of the words in which it is used go back more than a hundred years; and then its extensive use in modern times is chiefly due to the naturalists who want it to express in a short and precise manner certain small organs (*budlet* Darwin; *bladelet* Todd; *conelet* Dana; *bulblet* Gray; *leaflet*, *fruitlet*, *featherlet*, etc.)—an employment of the diminutive which is as far removed as possible from the terms of endearment found in other languages. The endings *-kin* and *-ling* (*princekin*, *princeling*) are not very frequently used and generally express contempt or derision. Then, of course, there is *-y*, *-ie* (*Billy*, *Dicky*, *auntie*, *birdie*, etc.) which corresponds exactly to the fondling-suffixes of other languages; but its application in English is restricted to the nursery and it is hardly ever used by grown-up people except in speaking to

<sup>1</sup> Cf. my *Lehrbuch der Phonetik*, 15. 34.



children. Besides, this ending is more Scotch than English.

14. The business-like, virile qualities of the English language also manifest themselves in such things as word-order. Words in English do not play at hide-and-seek, as they often do in Latin, for instance, or in German, where ideas that by right belong together are widely sundered in obedience to caprice or, more often, to a rigorous grammatical rule. In English an auxiliary verb does not stand far from its main verb, and a negative will be found in the immediate neighbourhood of the word it negatives, generally the verb (auxiliary). An adjective nearly always stands before its noun; the only really important exception is when there are qualifications added to it which draw it after the noun so that the whole complex serves the purpose of a relative clause: 'a man every way prosperous and talented' (Tennyson), 'an interruption too brief and isolated to attract more notice' (Stevenson). And the same regularity is found in modern English word-order in other respects as well. A few years ago I made my pupils calculate statistically various points in regard to word-order in different languages. I give here only the percentage in some modern authors of sentences in which the subject preceded the verb and the latter in its turn preceded its object (as in 'I saw him' as against 'Him I saw, but not her' or 'Whom did you see?'): —

Shelley, prose 89, poetry 85.

Byron, prose 98, poetry 81.

Macaulay, prose 82.

Carlyle, prose 87.

Tennyson, poetry 88.

Dickens, prose 91.

Swinburne, poetry 88.

Pinero, prose 97.

For the sake of comparison I mention that one Danish prose-writer (J. P. Jacobsen) had 82, a Danish poet (Drachmann) 61, Goethe (poetry) 80, a modern German prose writer (Tovote) 81, Anatole France 66,

Gabriele d'Annunzio 49 per cent of the same word-order. That English has not always had the same regularity, is shown by the figure for Beowulf being 16, and for King Alfred's prose 40. Even if I concede that our statistics did not embrace a sufficient number of extracts to give fully reliable results<sup>1</sup>, still it is indisputable that English shows more regularity and less caprice in this respect than most or probably all cognate languages, without however, attaining the rigidity found in Chinese, where the percentage in question would be 100 (or very near it). English has not deprived itself of the expedient of inverting the ordinary order of the members of a sentence when emphasis requires it, but it makes a more sparing use of it than German and the Scandinavian languages, and in most cases it will be found that these languages emphasize without any real necessity, especially in a great many every-day phrases: 'dær har jeg ikke været', 'dort bin ich nicht gewesen', 'I haven't been there'; 'det kan jeg ikke', 'das kann ich nicht', 'I can't do that'. In the usual phrase, 'det veed jeg ikke', 'das weiß ich nicht', *det* or *das* is often superfluously stressed, where the Englishman does not even find it necessary to state the object at all: 'I don't know.' Note also that in English the subject precedes the verb after most introductory adverbs: 'now he comes'; 'there she goes', while German and Danish have, and English had till a few centuries ago, the inverted order: 'jetzt kommt er', 'da geht sie'; 'nu kommer han', 'dær går hun', 'now comes he', 'there goes she'. Thus order and consistency signalize the modern stage of the English language.

15. No language is logical in every respect, and we must not expect usage to be guided always by strictly logical principles. It was a frequent error with the older grammarians that whenever the actual grammar of a language did not seem conformable to the rules

<sup>1</sup> Supplemental statistics are given by Curtis, *Anglia Beiblatt* 1908, p. 137.

of abstract logic they blamed the language and wanted to correct it. Without falling into that error we may, nevertheless, compare different languages and judge them by the standard of logic, and here again I think that, apart from Chinese, which has been described as pure applied logic, there is perhaps no language in the civilized world that stands so high as English. Look at the use of the tenses; the difference between the past *he saw* and the composite perfect *he has seen* is maintained with great consistency as compared with the similarly formed tenses in Danish, not to speak of German, so that one of the most constant faults committed by English-speaking Germans is the wrong use of these forms ('Were you in Berlin?' for 'Have you been in (or to) Berlin?', 'In 1815 Napoleon has been defeated at Waterloo' for 'was defeated'). And then the comparatively recent development of the expanded (or 'progressive') tenses has furnished the language with the wonderfully precise and logically valuable distinction between 'I write' and 'I am writing', 'I wrote' and 'I was writing'. French has something similar in the distinction between *le passé défini* (*j'écrivis*) and *l'imparfait* (*j'écrivais*), but on the one hand the former tends to disappear, or rather has already disappeared in the spoken language, at any rate in Paris and in the northern part of the country, so that *j'ai écrit* takes its place and the distinction between 'I wrote' and 'I have written' is abandoned; on the other hand the distinction applies only to the past while in English it is carried through all tenses. Furthermore, the distinction as made in English is superior to the similar one found in the Slavic languages, in that it is made uniformly in all verbs and in all tenses by means of the same device (*am -ing*), while the Slavic languages employ a much more complicated system of prepositions and derivative endings, which has almost to be learned separately for each new verb or group of verbs.

16. In praising the logic of the English language we must not lose sight of the fact that in most cases where, so to speak, the logic of facts or of the exterior world is at war with the logic of grammar, English is free from the narrow-minded pedantry which in most languages sacrifices the former to the latter or makes people shy of saying or writing things which are not 'strictly grammatical'. This is particularly clear with regard to number. *Family* and *clergy* are, grammatically speaking, of the singular number; but in reality they indicate a plurality. Most languages can treat such words only as singulars, but in English one is free to add a verb in the singular if the idea of unity is essential, and then to refer to this unit as *it*, or else to put the verb in the plural and use the pronoun *they*, if the idea of plurality is predominant. It is clear that this liberty of choice is often greatly advantageous. Thus we find sentences like these, 'As the clergy are or are not what they ought to be, so are the rest of the nation' (Jane Austen), or 'the whole race of man (*sing.*) proclaim it lawful to drink wine' (De Quincey), or 'the club all know that he is a disappointed man' (the same). In 'there are no end of people here that I don't know' (George Eliot) *no end* takes the verb in the plural because it is equivalent to 'many', and when Shelley writes in one of his letters 'the Quarterly are going to review me' he is thinking of the Quarterly (Review) as a whole staff of writers. Inversely, there is in English a freedom paralleled nowhere else of expressing grammatically a unity consisting of several parts, of saying, for instance, 'I do not think I ever spent a more delightful three weeks' (Darwin), 'for a quiet twenty minutes', 'another United States', cf. also 'a fortnight' (originally a fourteen-night); 'three years is but short' (Shakespeare), 'sixpence was offered him' (Darwin), 'ten minutes is heaps of time' (E. F. Benson), etc. etc.

17. A great many other phenomena in English show the same freedom from pedantry, as when

passive constructions such as 'he was taken no notice of' are allowed, or when adverbs or prepositional complexes may be used attributively as in 'his then residence', 'an almost reconciliation' (Thackeray), 'men invite their out-College friends' (Steadman), 'smoking his before-breakfast pipe' (Conan Doyle), 'in his threadbare, out-at-elbow shooting-jacket' (G. du Maurier), or when even whole phrases or sentences may be turned into a kind of adjective, as in 'with a quite at home kind of air' (Smedley), 'in the pretty diamond-cut-diamond scene between Pallas and Ulysses' (Ruskin), 'a little man with a puffy Say-nothing-to-me-, -or-I'll-contradict-you sort of countenance' (Dickens), 'With an I-turn-the-crank-of-the-Universe air' (Lowell), 'Rose is simply self-willed; a 'she will' or 'she won't' sort of little person' (Meredith). Although such combinations as the last-mentioned are only found in more or less jocular style, they show the possibilities of the language, and some expressions of a similar order belong permanently to the language, for instance, 'a would-be artist', 'a stay-at-home man', 'a turn-up collar'. Such things — and they might be easily multiplied — are inconceivable in such a language as French, where everything is condemned that does not conform to a definite set of rules laid down by grammarians. The French language is like the stiff French garden of Louis XIV, while the English is like an English park, which is laid out seemingly without any definite plan, and in which you are allowed to walk everywhere according to your own fancy without having to fear a stern keeper enforcing rigorous regulations. The English language would not have been what it is if the English had not been for centuries great respecters of the liberties of each individual and if everybody had not been free to strike out new paths for himself.

18. This is seen, too, in the vocabulary. In spite of the efforts of several authors of high standing, the English have never suffered an Academy to be in-

stituted among them like the French or Italian Academies, which had as one of their chief tasks the regulation of the vocabulary so that every word not found in their Dictionaries was blamed as unworthy of literary use or distinction. In England every writer is, and has always been, free to take his words where he chooses, whether from the ordinary stock of everyday words, from native dialects, from old authors, or from other languages, dead or living. The consequence has been that English dictionaries comprise a larger number of words than those of any other nation, and that they present a variegated picture of terms from the four quarters of the globe. Now, it seems to be characteristic of the two sexes in their relation to language that women move in narrower circles of the vocabulary, in which they attain to perfect mastery so that the flow of words is always natural and, above all, never needs to stop, while men know more words and always want to be more precise in choosing the exact word with which to render their idea, the consequence being often less fluency and more hesitation. It has been statistically shown that a comparatively greater number of stammerers and stutterers are found among men (boys) than among women (girls). Teachers of foreign languages have many occasions to admire the ease with which female students express themselves in another language after so short a time of study that most men would be able to say only few words hesitatingly and falteringly, but if they are put to the test of translating a difficult piece either from or into the foreign language, the men will generally prove superior to the women. With regard to their native language the same difference is found, though it is perhaps not so easy to observe. At any rate our assertion is corroborated by the fact observed by every student of languages that novels written by ladies are much easier to read and contain much fewer difficult words than those written by men. All this seems to justify us in setting

down the enormous richness of the English vocabulary to the same masculinity of the English nation which we have now encountered in so many various fields.

19. To sum up. The English language is a methodical, energetic, business-like and sober language, that does not care much for finery and elegance, but does care for logical consistency and is opposed to any attempt to narrow-in life by police regulations and strict rules either of grammar or of lexicon. As the language is, so also is the nation,

For words, like Nature, half reveal  
And half conceal the Soul within. (Tennyson)

24. The consonant-shift must not be imagined as having taken place at one moment; on the contrary it must have taken centuries, and modern research has begun to point out the various stages in this development. This is not the proper place to deal with detailed explanations of this important change, as we must hurry on to more modern times; suffice it then to give a few examples to show how it affected the whole look of the language. Any *p* was changed to *f*, — thus we have *father* corresponding to *pater* and similar forms in the cognate languages; any *t* was made into *th* [þ], as in *three*, — compare Latin *tres*; any *k* became *h*, — as *cornu* = *horn*.<sup>1</sup> And as any *b* or *d* or *g*, any *bh*, *dh*, *gh* was similarly shifted, you will understand that there were comparatively few words that were not altered past recognition; still such there were, for instance *mus*, now *mouse*, which contained none of the consonants susceptible of the shifting in question.

25. The second change affected the general character of the language even more thoroughly. Where previously the stress was sometimes on the first syllable of the word, sometimes on the second, or on the third, etc., without any seeming reason and without any regard to the intrinsic importance of that syllable, a complete revolution simplified matters so that the stress rules may be stated in a couple of lines: nearly all words were stressed on the first syllable; the chief exceptions occurred only where the word was a verb beginning with one out of a definite number of prefixes, such as those we have in modern English *beget*, *forget*, *overthrow*, *abide*, etc. Verner has shown that this shifting of the place of the accent took place later than the Germanic consonant-shift, and we shall now inquire into the relative importance of the two.

Rask's and Grimm's merits in this discovery see *Language*, p. 48ff.

<sup>1</sup> Latin words are here chosen for convenience only as representing these old consonants with great fidelity, but of course it must not be supposed that the English words named come from the Latin. *P*, *t*, *k* were not shifted after *s*.



26. The consonant-shift is important to the modern philologist, in so far as it is to him the clearest and least ambiguous criterion of the Germanic languages: a word with a shifted consonant is Germanic, and a word with an unshifted consonant in any of the Germanic languages must be a loan-word; whereas the shifted stress is no such certain criterion, chiefly because many words had always had the stress on the first syllable. But if we ask about the intrinsic importance of the two changes, that is, if we try to look at matters from the point of view of the language itself, or rather the speakers, we shall see that the second change is really the more important one. It does not matter much whether a certain number of words begin with *p* or with *f*, but it does matter, or at any rate it *may* matter, very much whether the language has a rational system of accentuation or not; and I have no hesitation in saying that the old stress-shift has left its indelible mark on the structure of the language and has influenced it more than any other phonetic change.<sup>1</sup> The significance of the stress shift will, perhaps, appear most clearly if we compare two sets of words in modern English. Something like the Aryan stress system is found in numerous words taken in recent times from the classical languages, thus *'family*, *fa'miliar*, *famili'arity* or *'photograph*, *pho'tographer*, *photo'graphic*.<sup>2</sup> The shifted Germanic system is shown in such groups as *'love*, *'lover*, *'loving*, *'lovingly*, *'lovely*, *'loveliness*, *'loveless*, *'lovelessness*, or *'king*, *'kingdom*, *'kingship*, *'kingly*, *'kingless*, etc. As it is characteristic of all Aryan languages that suffixes play a much greater role than prefixes, word formation being generally by endings, it follows that where the Germanic stress system has come into force, the syllable that is most important has also the strongest stress, and that the relatively insignificant modifications of the chief idea which are

<sup>1</sup> Except perhaps the disappearance of so many weak *e*'s about 1400.

<sup>2</sup> I indicate stress by means of a short vertical stroke<sup>1</sup> immediately before the beginning of the strong syllable.

indicated by formative syllables are also accentually subordinate. This is, accordingly, a perfectly logical system, corresponding to the principal rule observed in sentence stress, viz that the stressed words are generally the most important ones. As, moreover, want of stress tends everywhere to obscure vowel-sounds, languages with movable accent are exposed to the danger that related words, or different forms of the same word, are made more different than they would else have been, and their connexion is more obscured than is strictly necessary; compare, for instance, the two sounds in the first syllable of *family* [æ]<sup>1</sup> and *familiar* [ə], or the different treatment of the vowels in *photograph*, *photographer* and *photographic* ['fɒtɒgrəf, fɒ'tɒgrəfə, fɒtɒ'græfɪk]. The phonetic clearness inherent in the consistent stress system is certainly a linguistic advantage, and the obscuration of the connexion between related words is generally to be considered a drawback. The language of our forefathers seems therefore to have gained considerably by replacing the movable stress by a fixed one.

27. The question naturally arises: why was the accent shifted in this way? Two possible answers present themselves. The change may have been either a purely mechanical process, by which the first syllable was stressed without any regard to signification, or else it may have been a psychological process, by which the root syllable became stressed because it was the most important part of the word. As in the vast majority of cases the root syllable is the first, the question must be decided from those cases where the two things are not identical. Kluge<sup>2</sup> infers from the treatment of reduplicated forms of the perfect corresponding to Latin *cecidi*, *peperci*, etc. that the shifting was a purely mechanical process; for it was not the most important syllable that was stressed in

1 A list of the phonetic symbols used in this book will be found on the last page.

2 Paul's *Grundriss* I 2 889.

Gothic *haihait* 'called', *rairoþ* 'reflected', *lailot* 'let' (read *ai* as short *e*), while in the Old English forms of these words *heht*, *reord*, *leort* the vowel of the root syllable actually disappears. But it may be objected to this view that the reduplicated syllable was in some measure the bearer of the root signification, as it had enough left of the root to remind the hearer of it, and in pronouncing it the speaker had before him part at least of the significant elements. The first syllable of a reduplicated perfect must to him have been of a far greater importance than one of those prefixes which served only to modify to a small extent the principal idea expressed in the root syllable. The fact that the reduplicated syllable attracted the accent therefore speaks less strongly in favour of the mechanical explanation than does the want of stress on the verbal prefixes in the opposite direction, so that the case seems to me stronger for the psychological theory. In other words, we have here a case of *value-stressing*<sup>1</sup>; that part of the word which is of greatest value to the speaker and which therefore he especially wants the hearer to notice, is pronounced with the strongest stress.

28. We find the same principle of value-stressing everywhere, even in those languages whose traditional stress rests or may rest on other syllables than the root — this word is here used not in the sense of the etymologically original part of the word, but in the sense of what is to the actual instinct of the speaker intrinsically the most significant element — but in these languages it only plays the part of causing a deviation from the traditional stress now and then whereas in Germanic it became *habitual* to stress the root syllable, and this led to other consequences of some interest. In those languages where the stress syllable is not always the most significant one, the difference between stressed and unstressed syllables is generally less than in the Germanic languages; there is a nicer and

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<sup>1</sup> See my *Lehrbuch der Phonetik*, ch. 14. 8.

subtler play of accent, which we may observe in French, perhaps, better than elsewhere. In *nous chantons* the last syllable is stressed, but *chan-* is stronger than *for-* in Eng. *we forget*, because its psychological value is greater. Where a contrast is to be expressed it will most often be associated with one of the traditionally unstressed syllables, and the result is that the contrast is brought vividly before the mind with much less force than is necessary in English; in *nous chantons, et nous ne dansons pas* you need not even make *chan* and *dan* stronger, at any rate not much stronger than the endings, while in English *we sing, but we don't dance*, the syllables *sing* and *dance* must be spoken with an enormous force, because they are in themselves strongly stressed even when no contrast is to be pointed out. A still better example is French *c'est un acteur et non pas un auteur* and English *he is an actor, but not an author*; the Frenchman produces the intended effect by a slight tap, so to speak, on the two initial syllables of the contrasted words, while an Englishman hammers or knocks the corresponding syllables into the head of the hearer. The French system is more elegant, more artistic; the Germanic system is heavier or more clumsy, perhaps, in such cases as those just mentioned, but on the whole it must be said to be more rational, more logical, as an exact correspondence between the inner and the outer world is established if the most significant element receives the strongest phonetic expression. This Germanic stress-principle has been instrumental in bringing about important changes in other respects than those considered here. But what has been said here seems to me to indicate a certain connexion between language and national character; for has it not always been considered characteristic of the Germanic peoples (English, Scandinavians, Germans) that they say their say bluntly without much considering the artistic effect, and that they emphasize what is essential without always having due regard to nuances or accessory notions? and does

not the stress system we have been considering present the very same aspect?

29. We do not know in what century the stress was shifted<sup>1</sup>, but the shifting certainly took place centuries before the immigration of the English into Great Britain. To a similar remote period we must refer several other great changes affecting equally all the Germanic languages. One of the most important is the simplification of the tense system in the verb, no Germanic language having more than two tenses, a present and a past. As many of the old endings gradually wore off, they were not in themselves a sufficiently clear indication of the differences of tense, and the apophony or gradation (ablaut) of the root vowel, which had at first been only an incidental consequence of differences of accentuation, was felt more and more as the real indicator of tense. But neither apophony nor the remaining endings were fit to make patterns for the formation of tenses in new verbs; consequently, we see very few additions to the old stock of 'strong' verbs, and a new type of verbs, 'weak verbs', is constantly gaining ground. Whatever may have been the origin of the dental ending used in the past tense of these verbs, it is very extensively used in all Germanic languages and is, indeed, one of the characteristic features of their inflexional system. It has become the 'regular' mode of forming the preterit, that is, the one resorted to whenever new verbs are called into existence.

30. To this early period, while the English were still living on the Continent with their Germanic brethren, belong the first class of loan-words. No language is

<sup>1</sup> Nothing can be concluded from the existence at the time of Tacitus of such series of alliterating names for members of the same family as *Segestes Segimerus Segimundus*, etc (Kluge, Paul's *Grundriss* 357, 388), for alliteration does not necessarily imply that the syllable has the chief stress of the word; cf. the French formulas *messe et matines, Florent et Florette, Basans et Basille, monts et merveilles, qui vivra verra, à tort et à travers* (Nyrop, *Grammaire historique* I 458).

### Chapter III.

#### Old English.

33. We now come to the first of those important historical events which have materially influenced the English language, namely the settlement of Britain by Germanic tribes. The other events of paramount importance, which we shall have to deal with in succession, are the Scandinavian invasion, the Norman conquest, and the revival of learning. A future historian will certainly add the spreading of the English language in America, Australia, and South Africa. But none of these can compare in significance with the first conquest of England by the English, an event which was, perhaps, fraught with greater consequences for the future of the world in general than anything else in history. The more is the pity that we know so very little either of the people who came over or of the state of things they found in the country they invaded. We do not know exactly *when* the invasion began; the date usually given is 449, but Bede, on whose authority this date rests, wrote about three hundred years later, and much may have been forgotten in so long a period. Many considerations seem to make it more advisable to give a much earlier date<sup>1</sup>; however, as we must imagine that the invaders did not come all at once, but that the settlement took up a comparatively long period during which new hordes were continually arriving, the question of date is of no great consequence, and we are probably on the safe side if we say that after a long series of Germanic invasions the

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<sup>1</sup> R. Thurneysen, *Wann sind die Germanen nach England gekommen?* in Eng. Studien 22. 163.

greater part of the country was in their power in the latter half of the fifth century.

34. *Who* were the invaders, and where did they come from? This, too, has been a point of controversy<sup>1</sup>. According to Bede, the invaders belonged to the three tribes of Angles, Saxons, and Jutes; and linguistic history corroborates his statement in so far as we have really three dialects, or groups of dialects: the Anglian dialects in the North with two subdivisions, Northumbrian and Mercian, the Saxon dialects in the greater part of the South, the most important of which was the dialect of Wessex (West-Saxon), and the Kentish dialect, Kent having been, according to tradition, settled by the Jutes. These were closely connected linguistically with the Angles and Saxons, thus did not, like those inhabitants of Jutland whom we meet with in historical times, speak a Danish dialect. Though the Saxons were numerically superior to the Angles, the latter were influential enough to impose their name on the whole: the country is called England (OE. Engla-land), the nation English (OE. Englisc, Englismon, cf. also Angelcynn, Angelpeod), and the language English (OE. Englisc, Englisc gereord). The continental language that shows the greatest similarity to English, is Frisian, and it is interesting to note that

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<sup>1</sup> The complicated and often contradictory evidence, from old chroniclers, archæology, place-names and personal names, has been ably dealt with by G. Schütte in *Our Forefathers* II (Cambridge 1933), 218—326, where also a full bibliography is found for each special question. See also A. Erdmann, *Über die Heimat und den Namen der Angeln* Upsala 1890 — H. Møller, *Anzeiger für deutsches Altertum* XXII, 129ff. — O. Bremer in Paul's *Grundriß* I, 2, 115ff., where other references will be found — Chambers, *Widsith*, 1912, p. 237, 241 — J. Hoops, "Angelsachsen" in *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde* (Strassburg 1911). — A. Brandl, *Zur Geographie der altenglischen Dialekte* (Berlin, Akademie 1915). — Luick, *Histor. Grammatik*, 1921, p. 10—11 — J. Hoops, *Englische Sprachkunde* (Stuttgart 1923), p. 5ff. — E. Wadstein, *On the Origin of the English* (Uppsala 1927). — On the question of "Standard Old English" (the language of Alfred or of Ælfric), see C. L. Wrenn, *Transact. of the Philological Soc.* 1933, p. 65ff.

that (apart from numerous place-names) only about a dozen words did pass over into English from the British aborigines (among them are *ass*, *bannock*, *binn*, *brock*). How may we account for this very small number of loans? Are we to account for it, as some writers would, from the unscrupulous character of the conquest, the English having killed all those Britons who did not run away into the mountainous districts? The supposition of wholesale slaughter seems, however, to have been disproved by Zachrisson from the distribution of Keltic elements in place-names and the frequent occurrence of Keltic personal names among the Anglo-Saxons. The Britons were not exterminated, but absorbed by their Saxon conquerors. Their civilization and language vanished, but the race remained. On the other hand, a thorough consideration of the general conditions under which borrowings from one language by another take place will give us a clue to the mystery.<sup>1</sup> And as the whole history of the English language may be described from one point of view as one chain of borrowings, it will be as well at the outset to give a little thought to this general question.

### 37. The whole theory of Windisch about mixed lan-

ment of these questions in M. Forster, *Keltisches Wortgut im Englischen*, Halle 1921. *Cradle*, OE *cradol*, seems to be a diminutive of an old Germanic word meaning 'basket' (OHG. *chratto*). See also *bog* in NED. Windisch, in the article quoted below, note 2, thinks that the Germanic *tun* in English took over the meaning of Keltic *dunum* (Latin 'arx') on account of the numerous old Keltic names of places in *-dunum*, but in OE *tun* had more frequently the meaning of 'enclosure, yard' (cf. Dutch *tuin*), 'enclosed land round a dwelling', 'a single dwelling house or farm' (cf. Old Norse *tún*; still in Devonshire and Scotland); it was only gradually that the word acquired its modern meaning of village or town, long after the influence of the Kelts must have disappeared.

— *Slogan*, *piibroch*, *clan*, etc., are modern loans from Keltic.

<sup>1</sup> See especially Windisch, *Zur Theorie der Mischsprachen und Lehnwörter*. Berichte über die Verhandl. d. sächs. Gesellsch. d. Wissensch. XLIX. 1897 p. 101 ff. — G. Hempl, *Language-Rivalry and Speech-Differentiation in the Case of Race-Mixture*. Trans. of the Amer. Philol. Association XXIX. 1898 p. 80 ff. — A full treatment of the question of mixed languages and loan-words is found in my own book *Language*, ch. XI.



guages turns upon this formula: it is not the foreign language a nation learns that it turns into a mixed language, but its own native language becomes mixed under the influence of the foreign language. When we try to learn and talk a foreign language we do not intermix it with words taken from our own language; our endeavour will always be to speak the other language as purely as possible, generally we are painfully conscious of every native word that we use in the middle of phrases framed in the other tongue. But what we thus avoid in speaking a foreign language we very often do in our own. One of Windisch's illustrations is taken from Germany in the eighteenth century. It was then the height of fashion to imitate everything French, and Frederick the Great prided himself on speaking and writing good French. In his French writings one finds not a single German word, but whenever he wrote German, French words and phrases in the middle of German sentences abounded, for French was considered more refined, more *distingué*. Similarly, in the last remains of Cornish, the extinct Keltic language of Cornwall, numerous English loan-words occur, but the English did not mix any Cornish words with their own language, and the inhabitants of Cornwall themselves, whose native language was Cornish, would naturally avoid Cornish words when talking English, because in the first place English was considered the superior tongue, the language of culture and civilization, and second, the English would not understand Cornish words. Similarly in the Brittany of to-day, people will interlard their Breton talk with French words, while their French is pure, without any Breton words. We now see why so few Keltic words were taken over into English.<sup>1</sup> There was nothing to induce the ruling classes to learn the language of the inferior natives; it could never be fashionable for them to show an acquaintance with that

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<sup>1</sup> And so few Gallic words into French.

despised tongue by using now and then a Keltic word. On the other hand the Kelt would have to learn the language of his masters, and learn it well, he could not think of addressing his superiors in his own unintelligible gibberish, and if the first generation did not learn good English, the second or third would, while the influence they themselves exercised on English would be infinitesimal. — There can be no doubt that this theory of Windisch's is in the main correct, though we shall, perhaps, later on see instances where it holds good only with some qualification. At any rate we need look for no other explanation of the fewness of Keltic words in English.

38. About 600 A. D. England was christianized, and the conversion had far-reaching linguistic consequences. We have no literary remains of the pre-Christian period, but in the great epic of Beowulf we see a strange mixture of pagan and Christian elements. It took a long time thoroughly to assimilate the new doctrine, and, in fact, much of the old heathendom survives to this day in the shape of numerous superstitions. On the other hand we must not suppose that people were wholly unacquainted with Christianity before they were actually converted, and linguistic evidence points to their knowing, and having had names for, the most striking Christian phenomena centuries before they became Christians themselves. One of the earliest loan-words belonging to this sphere is *church*, OE. *cirice*, *cyrice*, ultimately from Greek *kuriakón* '(house) of the Lord' or rather the plural *kuriaká*. It has been well remarked that 'it is by no means necessary that there should have been a single *kirika* in Germany itself; from 313 onwards, Christian churches with their sacred vessels and ornaments were well-known objects of pillage to the German invaders of the Empire: if the first with which these made acquaintance, wherever situated, were called *kuriaká*, it would be quite sufficient to account for their familiarity with the word.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the full and able article *church* in the N. E. D. We need

They knew this word so well that when they became Christians they did not adopt the word universally used in the Latin church and in the Romanic languages (*ecclesia*, *église*, *chiesa*, etc.), and the English even extended the signifacation of the word *church* from the building to the congregation, the whole body of Christians *Minster*, OE. *mynster* from *monasterium*, belongs also to the earliest period. Other words of very early adoption were *devil* from *diabolus*, Greek *diábolos*, and *angel*, OE. *engel*<sup>2</sup> from *angelus*, Greek *áγγελος*. But the great bulk of specifically Christian terms did not enter the language till after the conversion

39. The number of new ideas and things introduced with Christianity was very considerable, and it is interesting to note how the English managed to express them in their language.<sup>3</sup> In the first place they adopted a great many foreign words together with the ideas. Such words are *apostle* OE. *apostol*, *disciple* OF. *discipul*, which has been more of an ecclesiastical word in English than in other languages, where it has the wider Latin sense of 'pupil' or 'scholar', while in English it is more or less limited to the twelve Disciples of Jesus or to similar applications. Further, the names of the whole scale of dignitaries of the church, from the *Pope*, OE. *papa*, downwards through *archbishop* OE. *ercebiscop*, *bishop* OE. *biscop*, to *priest* OE. *preost*; so also *monk* OE. *munuc*, *nun* OE. *nunna* with *provost* OE. *præfost* (*præpositus*) and *profost* (*propositus*), *abbot* OE. *abbod*

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not suppose, as is often done, that the word passed through Gothic, where the word is not found in the literature that has come down to us

<sup>2</sup> See below, § 86, on the relation between the OE. and the modern forms

<sup>3</sup> See especially H. S. MacGillivray, *The Influence of Christianity on the Vocabulary of Old English* (Halle 1902). I arrange his material from other points of view and must often pass the limits of his book, of which only one half has appeared. — Cf. also A. Keiser, *The Influence of Christianity on the Vocabulary of OE. Poetry* (Univ. of Illinois 1919).

(*d* from Romanic form) and the feminine OE. *abbudisse*. Here belong also such obsolete words as *sacerd* 'priest', *canonic* 'canon', *decan* 'dean', *ancor* or *ancra* 'hermit' (Latin *anachoreta*). To these names of persons must be added not a few names of things, such as *shrine* OE. *scrin* (*scrinium*), *cowl* OE. *cugele* (*cuculla*), *pall* OE. *pæll* or *pell* (*pallium*); *regol* or *reogol* 'monastic rule', *capitul* 'chapter', *mæsse* 'mass', and *offrian*, in Old English used only in the sense of 'sacrificing, bringing an offering'; the modern usage in 'he offered his friend a seat and a cigar' is later and from the French.

40. It is worth noting that most of these loans were short words that tallied perfectly well with the native words and were easily inflected and treated in every respect like these; the composition of the longest of them *ercebiscop*, was felt quite naturally as a native one. Such long words as *discipul* or *capitul*, or as *exorcista* and *acolitus*, which are also found, never became popular words; and *anachoreta* only became popular when it had been shortened to the convenient *ancor*.

41. The chief interest in this chapter of linguistic history does not, however, to my mind concern those words that were adopted, but those that were not. It is not astonishing that the English should have learnt some Latin words connected with the new faith, but it is astonishing, especially in the light of what later generations did, that they should have utilized the resources of their own language to so great an extent as was actually the case. This was done in three ways: by forming new words from the foreign loans by means of native affixes, by modifying the sense of existing English words, and finally by framing new words from native stems.

At that period the English were not shy of affixing native endings to foreign words; thus we have a great many words in *-had* (mod. *-hood*): *preosthad* 'priesthood', *clerichad*, *sacerdhad*, *biscopphad* 'episcopate', etc.; also such compounds as *biscopsetl* 'episcopal see', *biscopscir* 'diocese', and with the same ending *profostscir*

'provostship' and the interesting *scriptscir* 'parish, confessor's district' from *script* 'confession', a derivative of *scrifan* (*shrive*) from Lat. *scribere* in the sense 'impose penance, hear confession'. Note also such words as *cristendom* 'Christendom, Christianity' (also *cristnes*), and *cristnian* 'christen' or rather 'prepare a candidate for baptism'<sup>1</sup> and *biscopian* 'confirm' with the noun *bisceþung* 'confirmation'.

42. Existing native words were largely turned to account to express Christian ideas, the sense only being more or less modified. Foremost among these must be mentioned the word *God*. Other words belonging to the same class and surviving to this day are *sin* OE. *synn*, *tithe* OE. *teoða*, the old ordinal for 'tenth'; *easter* OE. *eastron* was the name of an old pagan spring festival, called after Austro, a goddess of spring.<sup>2</sup> Most of the native words adapted to Christian usage have since been superseded by terms taken from Latin or French. Where we now say *saint* from the French, the old word was *halig* (mod. holy), preserved in *All-hallows-day* and *Allhallow-e'en*; the Latin *sanct* was very rarely used. *Scaru*, from the verb *scieran* 'shear, cut' has been supplanted by *tonsure*, *had* by *order*, *hadian* by *consecrate* and *ordain*, *gesomnung* by *congregation*, *þegnung* by *service*, *witega* by *prophet*, *þrowere* (from *þrowian* 'to suffer') by *martyr*, *þrowerhad* or *þrowung* by *martyrdom*, *niwcumen mann* ('newcome man') by *novice*, *hrycg-hrægel* (from *hrycg* 'back' and *hrægel* 'dress') by *dossal*, and *ealdor* by *prior*. Compounds of the last-mentioned Old English word were also applied to things connected with the new religion, thus *teoðing-ealdor* 'dean' (chief of ten monks). *Ealdormann*, the native term for a sort of viceroy or lord-lieutenant, was used to denote the Jewish High-Priests as well as the Pharisees. OE. *husl*,

1 'Christman signifies primarily the 'prima signatio' of the catechumens as distinguished from the baptism proper.' Mac Gillivray p 21 Cf. *fuþwian* § 44.

2 Connected with Sanscrit *usra* and Latin *aurora* and, therefore, originally a dawn-goddess.

mod. *housel* 'the Eucharist'<sup>1</sup>, was an old pagan word for sacrifice or offering; an older form is seen in Gothic *hunsl*. The OE. word for 'altar', *weofod*, is an interesting heathen survival, for it goes back to a compound *wigbeod* 'idol-table', and it was probably only because phonetic development had obscured its connexion with *wig* 'idol' that it was allowed to remain in use as a Christian technical term.

43. This second class is not always easily distinguished from the third, or those words that had not previously existed but were now framed out of existing native speech-material to express ideas foreign to the pagan world. Word-composition and other formative processes were resorted to, and in some instances the new terms were simply fitted together from translations of the component parts of the Greek or Latin word they were intended to render, as when Greek *euaggélion* was rendered *god-spell* (good-spell, afterwards with shortening of the first vowel *godspell*, which was often taken to be the 'spell' or message of God), mod. *gospel*; thence *godspellere*, where now the foreign word *evangelist* is used. *Heathen*, OE. *hæðen*, according to the generally accepted theory, is derived from *hæþ* 'heath' in close imitation of Latin *paganus* from *pagus* 'a country district'. Cf also *þrynnes* or *þrines* ('three-ness') for *trinity*.

44. But in most cases we have no such literal rendering of a foreign term, but excellent words devised exactly as if the framers of them had never heard of any foreign expression for the same conception — as, perhaps, indeed, in some instances they had not. Some of these display not a little ingenuity. The scribes and Pharisees of the New Testament were called *boceras* (from *boc* book) and *sunder-halgan* (from *sundor* 'apart, asunder, separate'); in the north the latter were also called *ælarwas* 'teachers of the Law' or *ældo* 'elders'.

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<sup>1</sup> Still used in the nineteenth century, e. g. by Tennyson, as an archaism.

A patriarch was called *heahfæder* 'high-father' or *eald-fæder* 'old-father'; the three Magi were called *tungol-witegan* from *tungol* 'star', and *witega* 'wise man'. For 'chaplain' we have *handpreost* or *hredpreost* ('family-priest'), for 'acolyte' different words expressive of his several functions: *huslþegn* ('Eucharist-servant'), *taporberend* ('taper-bearer') and *wæxberend* ('wax-bearer'); instead of *ercebiscop* 'archbishop' we sometimes find *heahbiscop* and *ealdorbiscop*. For 'hermit' *ansetla* and *westensella* ('sole-settler', 'desert-settler') were used. 'Magic art' was called *scincræft* ('phantom-art'); 'magician' *scincræftiga* or *scinlæca*, *scinnere*, 'phantom' or 'superstition', *scinlac*. For the disciples of Christ we find, beside *discipul* mentioned above, no less than ten different English renderings (*cniht*, *folgere*, *gingra*, *hieremon*, *læringman*, *leornere*, *leorning-cniht*, *leorningman*, *underþeodda*, *þegn*)<sup>1</sup> To 'baptize' was expressed by *dyppan* 'dip' (cf. German *taufen*, Dan. *døbe*) or more often by *fulwian* (from *ful-wihan* 'to consecrate completely'); 'baptism' by *fulwiht* or, the last syllable being phonetically obscured, *fulluht*, and John the Baptist was called *Johannes se fulluhtere*.

45. The power and boldness of these numerous native formations can, perhaps, be best appreciated if we go through the principal compounds of *God*: *godbot* 'atonement made to the church', *godcund* 'divine, religious, sacred', *godcundnes* 'divinity, sacred office', *godferht* 'pious', *godgiæld* 'idol', *godgim* 'divine gem', *godhad* 'divine nature', *godmægen* 'divinity', *godscyld* 'impiety', *godscyldig* 'impious', *godsibb* 'sponsor', *godsibbræden* 'sponsorial obligations', *godspell* (cf., however, § 43), *godspelbodung* 'gospel-preaching', *godspellere* 'evangelist', *godspellian* 'preach the gospel', *godspellisc* 'evangelical', *godspeltraht* 'gospel-commentary', *godspræce* 'oracle', *godsunu* 'godson', *godþrymm* 'divine majesty', *godwrac* 'impious', *godwracnes* 'impiety'. Such a list as this, with the modern translations, shows the gulf

<sup>1</sup> MacGillivray p. 44.

between the old system of nomenclature, where everything was native and, therefore, easily understood by even the most uneducated, and the modern system, where with few exceptions classical roots serve to express even simple ideas, observe that although *gospel* has been retained, the easy secondary words derived from it have given way to learned formations. Nor was it only religious terms that were devised in this way; for Christianity brought with it also some acquaintance with the higher intellectual achievements in other domains, and we find such scientific terms as *læce-cræft* 'leech-craft' for medicine, *tungol-æ* ('star-law') for astronomy, *eƿnriht* for equinox, *sunni-stede* and *sunni-ghite* for solstice, *sunni-folegend* (sunfollower) for heliotrope, *tid* 'tide' and *gemet* 'measure' for tense and mood in grammar, *foresetnes* for preposition, etc., in short a number of scientific expressions of native origin, such as is equalled among the Germanic languages in Icelandic only.<sup>1</sup>

46. If now we ask, why did not the Anglo-Saxons adopt more of the ready-made Latin or Greek words, it is easy to see that the conditions here are quite different from those mentioned above when we asked a similar question with regard to Celtic. There we had a real race-mixture, where people speaking two different languages were living in actual contact in the same country. Here we have no Latin-speaking nation or community in actual intercourse with the English; and though we must suppose that there was a certain mouth-to-mouth influence from missionaries which might familiarize part of the English nation with some of the specifically Christian words, these were certainly at first introduced in far greater number through the medium of writing, exactly as is the case with Latin and Greek importations in recent times. Why, then, do we see such a difference between the practice of

<sup>1</sup> On later Old English loans from Latin see especially O. Funke, *Die gelehrten lateinischen Lehn- und Fremdwörter in der altengl. Lit.* (Halle 1914).



that remote period and our own time? One of the reasons seems obviously to be that people then did not know so much Latin as they learnt later, so that these learned words, if introduced, would not have been understood. We have it on King Alfred's authority that in the time immediately preceding his own reign 'there were very few on this side of the Humber who could understand their (Latin) rituals in English, or translate a letter from Latin into English, and I believe that there were not many beyond the Humber. There were so few of them that I cannot remember a single one south of the Thames when I came to the throne . . . and there was also a great multitude of God's servants, but they had very little knowledge of the books, for they could not understand anything of them, because they were not written in their language.'<sup>1</sup> And even in the previous period which Alfred regrets, when 'the sacred orders were zealous in teaching and learning', and when, as we know from Bede and other sources<sup>2</sup>, Latin and Greek studies were pursued successfully in England, we may be sure that the percentage of those who would have understood the learned words, had they been adopted into English, was not large. There was, therefore, good reason for devising as many popular words as possible. However, the manner in which our question was put was not, perhaps, quite fair, for we seemed to presuppose that it would be natural for a nation to adopt as many foreign terms as its linguistic digestion would admit, and that it would be matter for surprise if a language had fewer foreign elements than Modern English. But on the contrary, it is rather the natural thing for a language to utilize its own resources before drawing on other languages. The Anglo-Saxon principle of adopting only such words as were easily assimilated with the native vocabulary,

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<sup>1</sup> King Alfred's West-Saxon Version of Gregory's *Pastoral Care*. Preface (Sweet's translation).

<sup>2</sup> See T N Toller, *Outlines of the History of the English Language*. Cambridge 1900, p. 68ff.

for the most part names of concrete things, and of turning to the greatest possible account native words and roots, especially for abstract notions, — that principle may be taken as a symptom of a healthful condition of a language and a nation; witness Greek, where we have the most flourishing and vigorous growth of abstract and other scientifically serviceable terms on a native basis that the world has ever seen, and where the highest development of intellectual and artistic activity went hand in hand with the most extensive creation of indigenous words and an extremely limited importation of words from abroad. It is not, then, the Old English system of utilizing the vernacular stock of words, but the modern system of neglecting the native and borrowing from a foreign vocabulary that has to be accounted for as something out of the natural state of things. A particular case in point will illustrate this better than long explanations.

47. To express the idea of a small book that is always ready at hand, the Greeks had devised the word *egkheiridion* from *en* 'in', *kheir* 'hand' and the suffix *-idion* denoting smallness; the Romans similarly employed their adjective *manualis* 'pertaining to *manus*, the hand' with *liber* 'book' understood. What could be more natural then, than for the Anglo-Saxons to frame according to the genius of their own language the compound *handboc*? This naturally would be especially applied to the one kind of handy books that the clergy were in particular need of, the book containing the occasional and minor public offices of the Roman church. Similar compounds were used, and are used, as a matter of course, in the other cognate languages, — German *handbuch*, Danish *håndbog*, etc. But in the Middle English period, *handboc* was disused, the French (Latin) *manual* taking its place, and in the sixteenth century the Greek word (*enchiridion*) too was introduced into the English language. And so accustomed had the nation grown to preferring strange and exotic words that when in the nineteenth century

*handbook* made its re-appearance it was treated as an unwelcome intruder. The oldest example of the new use in the NED. is from 1814, when an anonymous book was published with the title 'A Handbook for modelling wax flowers'. In 1833 Nicolas in the preface to a historical work wrote, 'What the Germans would term and which, if our language admitted of the expression, would have been the fittest title for it, 'The Handbook of History'', — but he dared not use that title himself. Three years later Murray the publisher ventured to call his guide-book 'A Hand-Book for Travellers on the Continent', but reviewers as late as 1843 apologized for copying this comed word. In 1888 Rogers speaks of the word as a tasteless innovation, and Trench in his 'English Past and Present' (1854; 3rd ed. 1856 p. 71) says, 'we might have been satisfied with 'manual', and not put together that very ugly and very unnecessary word 'handbook', which is scarcely, I should suppose, ten or fifteen years old'. Of late years, the word seems to have found more favour, but I cannot help thinking that state of language a very unnatural one where such a very simple, intelligible, and expressive word has to fight its way instead of being at once admitted to the very best society.

48. The Old English language, then, was rich in possibilities, and its speakers were fortunate enough to possess a language that might with very little exertion on their part be made to express everything that human speech can be called upon to express. There can be no doubt that if the language had been left to itself, it would easily have remedied the defects that it certainly had, for its resources were abundantly sufficient to provide natural and expressive terms even for such a new world of concrete things and abstract ideas as Christianity meant to the Anglo-Saxons. It is true that we often find Old English prose clumsy and unwieldy, but that is more the fault of the literature than of the language itself. A good prose style is everywhere a late acquirement, and the work of

whole generations of good authors is needed to bring about the easy flow of written prose. Neither, perhaps, were the subjects treated of in the extant Old English prose literature those most suitable for the development of the highest literary qualities. But if we look at such a closely connected language as Old Norse, we find in that language a rapid progress to a narrative prose style which is even now justly admired in its numerous sagas; and I do not see so great a difference between the two languages as would justify a scepticism with regard to the perfectibility of Old English in the same direction. And, indeed, we have positive proof in a few passages that the language had no mean power as a literary medium; I am thinking of Alfred's report of the two great Scandinavian explorers Ohthere and Wulfstan who visited him, of a few passages in the Saxon Chronicle, and especially of some pages of the homilies of Wulfstan, where we find an impassioned prose of real merit.

49. If Old English prose is undeveloped, we have a very rich and characteristic poetic literature, ranging from powerful pictures of battles and of fights with mythical monsters to religious poems, idyllic descriptions of an ideal country and sad ones of moods of melancholy. It is not here the place to dwell upon the literary merit of these poems, as we are only concerned with the language. But to anyone who has taken the trouble — and it is a trouble — to familiarize himself with that poetry, there is a singular charm in the language it is clothed in, so strangely different from modern poetic style. The movement is slow and leisurely; the measure of the verse does not invite us to hurry on rapidly, but to linger deliberately on each line and pause before we go on to the next. Nor are the poet's thoughts too light-footed; he likes to tell us the same thing two or three times. Where a single *he* would suffice he prefers to give a couple of such descriptions as 'the brave prince, the bright hero, noble in war, eager and spirited' etc., descriptions which add no new trait to the

mental picture, but which, nevertheless, impress us artistically and work upon our emotions, very much like repetitions and variations in music. These effects are chiefly produced by heaping synonym on synonym, and the wealth of synonymous terms found in Old English poetry is really astonishing, especially in certain domains, which had for centuries been the stock subjects of poetry. For 'hero' or 'prince' we find in *Beowulf* alone at least thirty-six words (*æðeling. æscwiga. aglæca. beadorinc. beaggyfa. bealdor. beorn. brego. brytta. byrnwiga. ceorl. cniht. cyning. dryhten. ealdor. eorl. eðelweard. fengel. frea. freca. fruma. hæled. hlaford. hyse. leod. mecg. nið. oretta. ræswa. rinc. secg. þegn. þengel. þeoden. wer. wiga*). For 'battle' or 'fight' we have in *Beowulf* at least twelve synonyms (*beadu. guð. heaðo. hild. lindplega. nið. orleg. ræs. sacu. geslyht. gewinn. wig*). *Beowulf* has seventeen expressions for the 'sea' (*brim. flod. garsecg. hæf. heaðu? holm. holmwylm. hronrad. lagu. mere. merestræt. sæ. seggrad. stream. wæd. wæg. yþ*), to which should be added thirteen more from other poems (*flodweg. flodwielm. flot. flotweg. holmweg. hronmere. mereflod. merestream. sæflod. sæholm. sæstream. sæweg. yþmere*). For 'ship' or 'boat' we have in *Beowulf* eleven words (*bat. brenting. ceol. fær. flota. naca. sæbat. sægenga. sæwudu. scip. sundwudu*) and in other poems at least sixteen more words (*brimhengest. brimþisa. brimwudu. cnearr. flodwudu. flotscip. holmærn. merebat. merehengest. mereþyssa. sæflota. sæhengest. sæmearh. yþbord. yþhengest. yþhof. yþlid. yþlida*).

50. How are we to account for this wealth of synonyms? We may subtract, if we like, such compound words as are only variations of the same comparison, as when a ship is called a sea-horse, and then different words for sea (*sæ, mere, yþ*) are combined with the words *hengest* 'stallion' and *mearh* 'mare'; but even if this class is not counted, the number of synonyms is great enough to call for an explanation. A language has always many terms for those things that interest

the speakers in their daily doings; thus Sweet says: 'if we open an Arabic dictionary at random, we may expect to find something about a camel: 'a young camel', 'an old camel', 'a strong camel', 'to feed a camel on the fifth day', 'to feel a camel's hump to ascertain its fatness', all these being not only simple words, but root-words'.<sup>1</sup> And when we read that the Araucanians (in Chile) distinguished nicely in their languages between a great many shades of hunger, our compassion is excited, as Gabelentz remarks.<sup>2</sup> In the case of the Anglo-Saxons, however, the conclusion we are justified in drawing from their possessing such a great number of words connected with the sea is not, perhaps, that they were a seafaring nation, but rather, as these words are chiefly poetical and not used in prose, that the nation *had been* seafaring, but had given up that life while reminiscences of it were still lingering in their imagination.

51. In many cases we are now unable to see any difference in signification between two or more words, but in the majority of these instances we may assume that even if, perhaps, the Anglo-Saxons in historical times felt no difference, their ancestors did not use them indiscriminately. It is characteristic of primitive peoples that their languages are highly specialized, so that where we are contented with one generic word they have several specific terms. The aborigines of Tasmania had a name for each variety of gum-tree and wattle-tree, etc., but they had no equivalent for the expression 'a tree'. The Mohicans have words for cutting various objects, but none to convey *cutting* simply. The Zulus have such words as 'red cow', 'white cow', 'brown cow', etc., but none for 'cow' generally. In Cherokee, instead of one word for 'washing' we find different words, according to what is washed, 'I wash myself, — my head, — the head of somebody

1 Sweet, *The Practical Study of Language*, 1899, p. 163.

2 Gabelentz, *Sprachwissenschaft* 1891, 408.

else, — my face, — the face of somebody else, — my hands or feet, — my clothes, — dishes, — a child, etc.<sup>1</sup>

52. Too little has been done hitherto to investigate the exact shades of meaning in Old English words<sup>2</sup>, but I have little doubt that when we now render a number of words indiscriminately by 'sword', they meant originally distinct kinds of swords, and so in other cases as well. With regard to washing, we find something corresponding, though in a lesser degree, to the exuberance of Cherokee, for we have two words, *wacsan* (*wascan*) and *þwean*, and if we go through all the examples given in Bosworth and Toller's Dictionary, we find that the latter word is always applied to the washing of persons (hands, feet, etc.), never to inanimate objects, while *wascan* is used especially of the washing of clothes, but also of sheep, of 'the inwards' (of the victim, Leviticus I, 9 and 13)<sup>3</sup>. Observe also that *wascan* was originally used in the present tense only (as Kluge infers from *-sk-*), — a clear instance of that restriction in the use of words which is so common in the old stages of the language, but which so often appears unnatural to us.

53. The old poetic language on the whole showed a great many divergences from everyday prose, in the choice of words, in the word-forms, and also in the construction of the sentences. King Alfred in his prose always uses the form *het* as the preterit of *hatan*, but when he breaks out occasionally into a few lines of poetry he says *heht* instead. This should not surprise us, for we find the same thing everywhere, and the difference between the dictions of poetry and of prose

1 Jespersen, *Language*, London 1922, p. 430 ff.

2 A notable contribution towards this study is L. Schücking, *Untersuchungen zur Bedeutungslehre der angels. Dichtersprache*, Heidelberg 1915.

3 In a late text (R. Ben. 39, 7) we find the contrast *agðer ge fata þwean*, *ge wæterclādas wascan*, which does not agree exactly with the distinction made above. — Curiously enough in Old Norse, *vaska* is in the Sagas used only of washing the head with some kind of soap. In Danish, as well as in English, *vaske*, *wash*, is now the only word in actual use.

is perhaps greater in old or more primitive languages than in those most highly developed. In English, certainly, the distance between poetical and prose language was much greater in this first period than it has ever been since. The language of poetry seems to have been to a certain extent identical all over England, a kind of more or less artificial dialect, absorbing forms and words from the different parts of the country where poetry was composed at all, in much the same way as Homer's language had originated in Greece. This hypothesis seems to me to offer a better explanation of the facts than the current theory, according to which the bulk of Old English poetry was written at first in Northumbrian dialect and later translated into West-Saxon with some of the old Anglian forms kept inadvertently — and translated to such an extent that no trace of the originals should have been preserved. The very few and short pieces extant in old Northumbrian dialect are easily accounted for, even if we accept the theory of a poetical *koinē* or standard language prevailing in the time when Old English poetry flourished. But the whole question should be taken up by a more competent hand than mine.

54. The external form of Old English poetry was in the main the same as that of Old Norse, Old Saxon, and Old High German poetry; besides definite rules of stress and quantity, which were more regular than might at first appear, but which were not so strict as those of classical poetry, the chief words of each line were tied together by alliteration, that is, they began with the same sound, or, in the case of *sp*, *st*, *sc*, with the same sound group. The effect is peculiar, and may be appreciated in such a passage as this (I italicize the alliterative letters):

*Stræt was stanfah, stig wisode  
gumum ætgædere. Guðbyrne scan  
heard hondlocen, hringren scir  
song in searwum, þa hie to sele furðum  
in hyra gryregeatwum gangan cwomon.  
Setton sæmede sde scyldas,*



rondas regnhearde wiþ þæs recedes weal;  
 bugon þa to þence, — byrnan hringdon,  
 guþsearo gumena; garas stodon,  
 sæmanna searo samod ætgædere,  
 æscholt ufan græg, wæs se irenbreat  
 wæpnum gewurðad. þa þær wolne hæleþ  
 oretmecgas æfter æðelum fræg:  
 'Hwanon fergeaþ ge fætte scyldas,  
 græge syrcan, ond grimhelmas,  
 heresceafta heap? Ic eom Hroðgares  
 ar ond ombiht. Ne seali ic elþeodige  
 þus manige men modiglicran  
 Wen ic þæt ge for wolenco, nalles for wærcsīðum,  
 ac for higeþrymmum Hroðgar sohton'.<sup>1</sup>

55. Very rarely, combined with alliteration we find a sort of rime or assonance. In the prose of the last period of Old English the same artistic means were often resorted to to heighten the effect, and we find in Wulfstan's homilies such passages as the following, where all tricks of phonetic harmony are brought into play: 'in mordre and on manc, in susle and on sare, in wean and on wyrmslitum, betweonan deadum and deoflum, in bryne and on biternesse, in bealewe and on bradum ligge, in yrmþum, and on earfeðum, on swylt-

<sup>1</sup> Beowulf 320 ff.; in W. E. Leonard's rendering:  
 The street was laid with bright

stones;	the road led on the band;
The battle-byrnies shimmered,	the hard, the linked-by-hand,
The iron-rings, the gleaming,	amid their armor sang,
Whilst luther, in dread war-gear,	to hall they marched along,
The ocean-weary warriors	set down their buckles wide,
Their shields, so hard and hardy,	against that House's side,
They stacked points up, these	
seamen,	their ash-wood, gray-tipped
	spears;

And bent to bench, as clanked  
 An iron-troop well-weaponed!  
 Did of these men-at-arms there  
 "Ye bear these plated bucklers  
 These piled shafts of onset,  
 The Henchman and the Herald  
 Never so many strangers  
 I ween that it is for prowess,  
 That 't is indeed for glory,

their byrnies, battle-gears—  
 Then proud a Dane forthwith  
 enquire the kin and kith:  
 hither from what realms;  
 gray sarks, and visored helms?  
 of Hrothgar, lo, am I!  
 I've seen of mood more high.  
 and not for exile far,  
 that ye have sought Hrothgar."

ewale and sarum sorgum, in fyrenum bryne and on fulnesse, in toða gristbitum and in tintegrum' or again 'þær is éce ece and þær is sorgung and sargung, and a singal heof; þær is benda bite and dynta dyne, þær is wyrma slite and ealra wædla gripe, þær is wanung and granung, þær is yrmða gehwylc and ealra deofla geþring'.<sup>1</sup>

56. Nor has this love of alliterative word-combinations ever left the language; we find it very often in modern poetry, where however it is always subordinate to end-rime, and we find it in such stock phrases as —: it can neither *make* nor *mar* me, *busy* as *bees* (Chaucer, E 2422), *part* and *parcel*, *faint* and *feeble*, *ducks* and *drakes* (sometimes: play dick-duck-drake; Stevenson, Merry Men 277), what ain't *missed* ain't *mourned* (Pinero, Magistrate 5), as *bold* as *brass*, *free* and *franke* (Caxton, Reynard 41), *barnes* are *blessings* (Shakesp., All's I. 3. 28), as *cool* as a *cucumber*, as *still* as (a) *stone* (Chaucer, E 121, as any *stoon* E 171, he *stode* *stone* style, Malory 145), over *stile* and *stone* (Chaucer B 1988), from *top* to *toe* (from the *top* to *toe*, Shakesp. R 3 III. 1. 155), *might* and *main*, *fuss* and *fume*, *manners* *makyth* *man*, *care* *killed* a *cat*, *rack* and *ruin*, *nature* and *nurture* (Shakesp. Tp. IV. 1. 189; English Men of Science, their Nature and Nurture, the title of a book by Galton), etc. etc, even to Thackeray's 'faint fashionable fiddle-faddle and feeble court slipslop'. Alliteration sometimes modifies the meaning of a word, as when we apply *chick* to human offspring in 'no chick

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1 'In murder and in crime, in torment and grief, in pangs and in snakebites, between dead men and devils, in flames and in torture, in harm and in extensive fire, in misery and labour, in agony and serious sorrows, in blazing flames and in filth, in tooth-gnashing and in torments', and 'There is eternal ache and sorrow and lamentation, and never-ending grief, there is gnawing of chains and noise of blows; there snakes will bite and all miseries attack; there are groanings and moanings, troubles of every kind and a crowding together of all devils'. Wulfstan, Homilies, ed. by Napier, p. 187, 209. It is worthy of note that these poetical flights occur in descriptions of hell.

or child', or when we say 'a labour of love', without giving to *labour* the shade of meaning which it generally has as different from *work*. The word *foe*, too, which is generally used in poetry or archaic prose only, is often used in ordinary prose for the sake of alliteration in connexion with *friend* ('Was it an irruption of a friend or a foe?' Mercedith, *Egoist* 439; 'The Danes of Ireland had changed from foes to friends', Green, *Short Hist.* 107). Indeed alliteration comes so natural to English people, that Tennyson says that 'when I spout my lines first, they come out so alliteratively that I have sometimes no end of trouble to get rid of the alliteration'.<sup>1</sup> I take up the thread of my narrative after this short digression.

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<sup>1</sup> *Life*, by his Son, Tauchn. ed. II. 285, cf. R. L. Stevenson, *The Art of Writing* 31, and what the Danish poet and metricist E. v. d. Recke says to the same effect, *Principerne for den danske verskunst* 1881, p. 112, see also the amusing note by De Quincey, *Opium Eater* p. 96 (Macmillan's Library of Engl. Classics): 'Some people are irritated, or even fancy themselves insulted, by overt acts of alliteration, as many people are by puns, On their account let me say, that although there are here [in the passage to which the note is appended] eight separate f's in less than half a sentence, this is to be held as pure accident. In fact, at one time there were nine f's in the original cast of the sentence, until I, in pity of the affronted people, substituted *female agent* for *female friend*.' The reader need not be reminded of the excessive use of alliteration in Euphuism and of Shakespeare's satire in *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

## Chapter IV.

### The Scandinavians.

57. The Old English language, as we have seen, was essentially self-sufficing; its foreign elements were few and did not modify the character of the language as a whole. But we shall now consider three very important factors in the development of the language, three superstructures, as it were, that came to be erected on the Anglo-Saxon foundation, each of them modifying the character of the language, and each preparing the ground for its successor. A Scandinavian element, a French element, and a Latin element now enter largely into the texture of the English language, and as each element is characteristically different from the others, we shall treat them separately. First, then, the Scandinavian element.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The chief works on these loan-words, most of them treating nearly exclusively phonetic questions, are Erik Björkman, *Scandinavian Loan-Words in Middle English* (Halle I 1900, II 1902), an excellent book; Erik Brate, *Nordische Lehnwörter im Ormulum* (Beiträge zur Gesch. d. deutschen Sprache X, Halle 1884), Arnold Wall, *A Contribution towards the Study of the Scandinavian Element in the English Dialects* (Anglia XX, Halle 1898); G. T. Flom, *Scandinavian Influence on Southern Lowland Scotch* (New York, 1900) The dialectal material of the two last mentioned treatises is necessarily to a great extent of a doubtful character. See also Kluge in Paul's *Grundriss d. germ. Philol.* 2nd ed. p. 931 ff. (Strassburg 1899), Skeat, *Principles of English Etymology* p. 453 ff. (Oxford 1887), P. Thorson, *Anglo-Norse Studies* (Amsterdam 1936), and some other works mentioned below. I have excluded doubtful material; but a few of the words I give as Scandinavian, have been considered as native by other writers. In most cases I have been convinced by the reasons given by Björkman.

58. The English had resided for about four centuries in the country called after them, and during that time they had had no enemies from abroad. The only wars they had been engaged in were internal struggles between kingdoms belonging to, but not yet feeling themselves as one and the same nation. The Danes were to them not deadly enemies but a brave nation from over the sea, that they felt to be of a kindred race with themselves. The peaceful relations between the two nations may have been more intimate than is now generally supposed. An attempt has been made to show that an interesting, but hitherto mysterious Old English poem which is generally ascribed to the eighth century is a translation of a lost Scandinavian poem dealing with an incident in what was later to become the *Volsunga Saga*.<sup>1</sup> If this were not rather doubtful it would establish a literary intercourse between England and Scandinavia previous to the Viking ages, and therefore accord with the fact that the old Danish legends about King Hrothgar and his beautiful hall Heorot were preserved in England, even more faithfully than by the Danes themselves. Had the poet of *Beowulf* been able to foresee all that his countrymen were destined to suffer at the hands of the Danes, he would have chosen another subject for his great epic, and we should have missed the earliest noble outcome of the sympathy so often displayed by Englishmen for the fortunes of Denmark. But as it is, in *Beowulf* no coming events cast their shadow before<sup>2</sup>, and the English nation seems to have been taken entirely by surprise when

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1 W. W. Lawrence, *The First Riddle of Cynewulf*; W. H. Schofield, *Signy's Lament*. (Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, vol. XVII. Baltimore 1902.)

2 This was written before Schucking (*Beiträge* 43. 347) had called in question the date usually assigned to *Beowulf* (ab. 700). Schucking thinks it was written ab 900 at a Scandinavian court in England. See against this R. W. Chambers, *Beowulf* 2nd ed., (Cambridge 1932), p 322, 397, 487. — On different strata in *Beowulf* see especially W. A. Berendsohn, *Zur Vorgeschichte des Beowulf* (Copenhagen 1935).

about 790 the long series of inroads began, in which 'Danes' and 'heathens' became synonyms for murderers and plunderers. At first the strangers came in small troops and disappeared as soon as they had filled their boats with gold and other valuables; but from the middle of the ninth century, 'the character of the attack wholly changed. The petty squadrons which had till now harassed the coast of Britain made way for larger hosts than had as yet fallen on any country in the west; while raid and foray were replaced by the regular campaign of armies who marched to conquer, and whose aim was to settle on the land they won'<sup>1</sup>. Battles were fought with various success, but on the whole the Scandinavians proved the stronger race and made good their footing in their new country. In the peace of Wedmore (878), King Alfred, the noblest and staunchest defender of his native soil, was fain to leave them more than half of what we now call England; all Northumbria, all East Anglia and one half of Central England made out the district called the Danelaw.

59. Still, the relations between the two races were not altogether hostile. King Alfred not only effected the repulse of the Danes, he also gave us the first geographical description of the countries that the fierce invaders came from, in the passage already referred to (§ 48). Under the year 959, one of the chroniclers says of the Northumbrian king that he was widely revered on account of his piety, but in one respect he was blamed: 'he loved foreign vices too much and gave heathen (*i. e.* Danish) customs a firm footing in this country, alluring mischievous foreigners to come to this land.' And in the only extant private letter in Old English<sup>2</sup> the unknown correspondent tells his brother Edward that 'it is a shame for all of you to give up the English customs of your fathers and to prefer the customs of heathen men, who grudge you

<sup>1</sup> J. R. Green, *A Short History of the Engl. People*, Illustr. ed. p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> Edited by Kluge, *Engl. Studien* VIII. 62.

your very life; you show thereby that you despise your race and your forefathers with these bad habits, when you dress shamefully in Danish wise with bared neck and blinded eyes' (with hair falling over the eyes?). We see, then, that the English were ready to learn from, as well as to fight with the Danes. It is a small, but significant fact that in the glorious patriotic war-poem written shortly after the battle of Maldon (998) which it celebrates, we find for the first time one of the most important Scandinavian loan-words, *to call*; this shows how early the linguistic influence of the Danes began to be felt.

60. A great number of Scandinavian families settled in England never to return, especially in Norfolk, Suffolk and Lincolnshire, but also in Yorkshire, Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmoreland, etc. Numerous names of places, ending in *-by*, *-thorp* (*-torp*), *-beck*, *-dale*, *-thwaite*, etc., bear witness to the preponderance of the invaders in great parts of England, as do also many names of persons found in English from about 1000 A. D.<sup>1</sup> But these foreigners were not felt by the natives to be foreigners in the same manner as the English themselves had been looked upon as foreigners by the Kelts. As Green has it, 'when the wild burst of the storm was over, land, people, government reappeared unchanged. England still remained England; the conquerors sank quietly into the mass of those around them; and Woden yielded without a struggle to Christ. The secret of this difference between the two invasions was that the battle was no longer between men of different races. It was no longer a fight between Briton and German, between Englishman and Welshman. The life of these northern folk was in the main the life of the

<sup>1</sup> Björkman, *Nordische Personennamen in England* (Halle 1910), H Lindkvist, *Middle-Englsh Place-Names of Scandinavian Origin* (Upsala 1912), E Ekwall, *Scandinavians and Celts in the North-West of England* (Lund 1918), and in *Introduction to the Survey of Engl Place-Names I* (Cambridge 1924). According to Ekwall, the Scandinavians in the North-West did not come direct from Norway, but through Ireland.

earlier Englishmen. Their customs, their religion, their social order were the same; they were in fact kinsmen bringing back to an England that had forgotten its origins the barbaric England of its pirate forefathers. Nowhere over Europe was the fight so fierce, because nowhere else were the combatants men of one blood and one speech. But just for this reason the fusion of the northmen with their foes was nowhere so peaceful and so complete.<sup>1</sup> — It should be remembered, too, that it was a Dane, King Knut, who achieved what every English ruler had failed to achieve, the union of the whole of England into one peaceful realm.

61. King Knut was a Dane, and in the Saxon Chronicle the invaders were always called Danes, but from other sources we know that there were Norwegians too among the settlers. Attempts have been made to decide by linguistic tests which of the two nations had the greater influence in England<sup>2</sup>, a question beset with considerable difficulties and which need not detain us here. Suffice it to say that some words, such as ME. *boun*, Mod. *bound* 'ready' (to go to), *busk*, *boon*, *addle*, point rather to a Norwegian origin, while others, such as *-by* in place-names, *drown*, ME. *sum* 'as', agree better with Danish forms. In the great majority of cases, however, the Danish and Norwegian forms were at that time either completely or nearly identical, so that no decision as to the special homeland of the English loans is warranted. In the present work I therefore leave the question open, quoting Danish or ON. (Old Norse, practically = Old Icelandic) forms

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1 J. R. Green, *A Short History of the Engl. People*, Illustr. ed. p. 87.

2 Brate thought the loan-words exclusively Danish; Kluge, Wall, and Björkman consider some of them Danish, others Norwegian, though in details they arrive at different results. See Björkman, *Zur dialektischen Provenienz der nordischen Lehnwörter im Englischen*, Språkvetensk. sällskapets förhandlingar 1898—1901, Upsala, and his *Scand Loan-Words* p. 281ff. Cf. also Ekwall as quoted on p. 58 and J. Hoops, *Englische Sprachkunde* (Stuttgart 1928), p. 26f.



according as it is most convenient in each case, meaning simply Scandinavian.<sup>1</sup>

62. In order rightly to estimate the Scandinavian influence it is very important to remember how great the similarity was between Old English and Old Norse. To those who know only modern English and modern Danish, this resemblance is greatly obscured, first on account of the dissimilarities that are unavoidable when two nations live for nearly one thousand years with very little intercommunication, and when there is, accordingly, nothing to counterbalance the natural tendency towards differentiation, and secondly on account of a powerful foreign influence to which each nation has in the meantime been subjected, English from French, and Danish from Low German. But even now we can see the essential conformity between the two languages, which in those times was so much greater as each stood so much nearer to the common source. An enormous number of words were then identical in the two languages, so that we should now have been utterly unable to tell which language they had come from, if we had had no English literature before the invasion, nouns such as *man, wife, father, folk, mother, house, thing, life, sorrow, winter, summer*, verbs like *will, can, meet, come, bring, hear, see, think, smile, ride, stand, sit, set, spin*, adjectives and adverbs like *full, wise, well, better, best, mine and thine, over and under*, etc etc. The consequence was that an Englishman would have no great difficulty in understanding a viking, nay we have positive evidence that Norse people looked upon the English language as one with their own. On the other hand, Wulfstan speaks of the invaders as 'people who do not know your language' (ed Napier, p. 295), and in many cases indeed the

<sup>1</sup> Bjorkman's final words are 'These facts would seem to point to the conclusion that a considerable number of Danes were found everywhere in the Scandinavian settlements, while the existence in great numbers of Norwegians was confined to certain definite districts'

words were already so dissimilar that they were easily distinguished, for instance, when they contained an original *ai*, which in OE. had become long *a* (OE. *swan* = ON. *sveinn*), or *au*, which in OE. had become *ea* (OE. *leas* = ON. *lauss*, *louss*), or *sk*, which in English became *sh* (OE. *scyte*, now *shirt* = ON. *skyrta*).

63. But there are, of course, many words to which no such reliable criteria apply, and the difficulty in deciding the origin of words is further complicated by the fact that the English would often modify a word, when adopting it, according to some more or less vague feeling of the English sound that corresponded generally to this or that Scandinavian sound. Just as the name of the English king Æðelred Eadgares sunu is mentioned in the Norse saga of Gunnlaugr Ormstunga as Aðalráðr Játgeirsson, in the same manner *shift* is an Anglicized form of Norse *skipta*<sup>1</sup>; ON. *brúðlaup* 'wedding' was modified into *brydlop* (cf. OE. *bryd* 'bride'; a consistent Anglicizing would be *brydhleap*); *tíðende* is unchanged in Orrms *tíðennde*, but was generally changed into *tiding(s)*, cf. OE. *tīd* and the common Eng. ending *-ing*; ON. *þjónusta* 'service' appears as *þeonest*, *þenest*, and *þegnest*; ON. words with the negative prefix *ú* are made into English *un-*, e g. *untime* 'unseasonableness', *unbain* (ON. *úbeinn*) 'not ready', *unrad* or *unræd* 'bad counsel'<sup>2</sup>; cf. also *wæpnagetæc* below, and others

64. Sometimes the Scandinavians gave a fresh lease of life to obsolescent or obsolete native words. The preposition *till*, for instance, is found only once or twice in OE. texts belonging to the pre-Scandinavian period, but after that time it begins to be exceedingly common in the North, from whence it spreads southward; it was used as in Danish with regard to both time and space and it is still so used in Scotch. Similarly *dale* (OE. *dæl*) 'appears to have been reinforced from Norse (*dal*),

<sup>1</sup> In ME. forms with *sk* are also found, Björkman p. 126.

<sup>2</sup> Though the Scand. form is also found in a few instances: *oulist* 'listless', *oumautn* 'swoon'.

for it is in the North that the word is a living geographical name' (NED.), and *barn*, Scotch *bairn* (OE. *bearn*) would probably have disappeared in the North, as it did in the South, if it had not been strengthened by the Scandinavian word. The verb *blend*, too, seems to owe its vitality (as well as its vowel) to Old Norse, for *blandan* was very rare in Old English.

65. We also see in England a phenomenon, which, I think, is paralleled nowhere else to such an extent, namely the existence side by side for a long time, sometimes for centuries, of two slightly differing forms for the same word, one the original English form and the other Scandinavian. In the following the first form is the native one, the form after the dash the imported one.

66. In some cases both forms survive in standard speech, though, as a rule, they have developed slightly different meanings: *whole* (formerly *hool*) — *hale*; both were united in the old phrase 'hail and hool' | *no* — *nay*; the latter is now used only to add an amplifying remark ('it is enough, nay too much'), but formerly it was used to answer a question, though it was not so strong a negative as *no* ('Is it true? Nay.' 'Is it not true? No') | *rear* — *raise* | *from* — *fro*, now used only in 'to and fro' | *shirt* — *skirt* | *shot* — *scot* | *shriek* — *scream*, *screech* | *true* — *trigg* 'faithful, neat, tidy' | *edge* — *egg* vb. (to egg on, 'to incite'). OE. *leas* survives only in the suffix *-less* (nameless, etc.), while the Scand. *loose* has entirely supplanted it as an independent word.

67. In other cases, the Scandinavian form survives in dialects only, while the other belongs to the literary language: *dew* — *dag* 'dew, thin rain; vb. to drizzle' | *leap* — *loup* | *neat* — *nowt* 'cattle' | *church* — *kirk* | *churn* — *kirn* | *chest* — *kist* | *mouth* — *mun* | *yard* — *garth* 'a small piece of enclosed ground'. All these dialectal forms belong to Scotland or the North of England.

68. As a rule, however, one of the forms has in course of time been completely crowded out by the other.

The surviving form is often the native form, as in the following instances: *goat* — *gayte* | *heathen* — *heythen*, *haithen* | *loath* — *laith* | *grey* — *gra*, *gro* | *few* — *fa*, *fo* | *ash(es)* — *ask* | *fish* — *fisk* | *naked* — *naken* | *yarn* — *garn* | *bench* — *bennk* | *star* — *sterne* | *worse* — *werre*. Similarly the Scand. *thethen*, *hethen*, *hwethen* are generally supposed to have been discarded in favour of the native forms, OE. *þanon*, *heonan*, *hwanon*, to which was added an adverbial *s*: *thence*, *hence*, *whence*; but in reality these modern forms may just as well be due to the Scandinavian ones; for the loss of *th* cp. *since* from *sithence* (*sithens*, OE. *sifþan* + *s*).

69. This then leads us on to those instances in which the intruder succeeded in ousting the legitimate heir. Caxton in a well-known passage gives us a graphic description of the struggle between the native *ey* and the Scandinavian *egg*:

And certaynly our langage now used varyeth ferre from that whiche was used and spoken whan I was borne. For we englysshe men ben borne under the domynacyon of the mone, whiche is never stedfaste, but ever waverynge, wexynge one season, and waneth & dyscreaseth another season. And that comyn englysshe that is spoken in one shyre varyeth from a nother. In so moche that in my dayes happened that certayn marchauntes were in a shippe in tamyse, for to have sayled over the see into zelande. And for lacke of wynde, thei taryed atte forlond, and wente to lande for to refreshe them. And one of theym named sheffelde<sup>1</sup>, a mercer, cam in-to an hows and axed for mete; and specyally he axyd after eggys. And the goode wyf answerde, that she coude speke no frenshe. And the marchaunt was angry, for he also coude speke no frenshe, but wolde have hadde egges, and she understode hym not. And thenne at laste a nother sayd that he wolde have eyren. Then the good wyf sayd that she undêrstod

<sup>1</sup> Probably a north-country man.

hym wel. Loo, what sholde a man in thyse dayes now wryte, eggess or eyren. Certaynly it is harde to playse every man, by cause of dyversite & chaunge of langage.<sup>1</sup>

Very soon after this was written, the old English forms *ey*, *eyren* finally went out of use.

70. Among other word-pairs similarly fated may be mentioned: OE. *a*, ME. *o* 'ever' — *ay* (both were found together in the frequent phrase 'for ay and oo') | *tho* (cf. *those*) — *they* | *theigh*, *thah*, *thek* and other forms — *though* | *swon* — *swain* (boatswain, etc.) | *ibirde* — *birth* | *eie* — *awe* | *þunresdæi* — *Thursday* | *in* (on) *þe lifte* — *on loft*, now *aloft* | *swuster* — *sister* | *chetel* — *kettle*; and finally not a few words with English *y* over against Scand. *g*: *yete* — *get* | *yeme* 'care, heed' — *gom(e)*, dialectal *gaum* 'sense, wit, tact' | *yelde* — *guild* 'fraternity, association' | *yive* or *yeve* — *give* *yift* — *gift*. In this last-mentioned word *gift*, not only is the initial sound due to Scandinavian, but also the modern meaning, for the Old English word meant 'the price paid by a suitor in consideration of receiving a woman to wife' and in the plural 'marriage, wedding'. No subtler linguistic influence can be imagined than this, where a word has been modified both with regard to pronunciation and meaning, and curiously enough has by that process been brought nearer to the verb from which it was originally derived (*give*).

71. In some words the old native form has survived, but has adopted the signification attached in Scandinavian to the corresponding word; thus *dream* in OE. meant 'joy', but in ME. the modern meaning of 'dream' was taken over from ON. *draumr*, Dan. *drom*; analogous cases are *bread* (OE. *bread* 'fragment'), *bloom* (OE. *bloma* 'mass of metal'?). In one word, this same process of sense-shifting has historical significance; the OE. *eorl* meant vaguely a 'nobleman' or more loosely 'a brave

<sup>1</sup> Caxton's *Eneydos*, p. 2—3. (E.E.T.S. Extra Series 57.) Cf. R. Hittmair, *Aus Caxtons Vorreden* (Leipzig 1934), p. 110.

warrior' or 'man' generally; but under Knut it took over the meaning of the Norse *jarl* 'an under-king' or governor of one of the great divisions of the realm, thus paving the way for the present signification of *earl* as one of the grades in the (French) scale of rank. OE. *freond* meant only 'friend', whereas ON. *frændi*, Dan. *frænde* means 'kinsman', but in Orm and other ME. texts the word sometimes has the Scand. meaning<sup>1</sup> and so it has to this day in Scotch and American dialects (see many instances in J. Wright's *Dialect Dictionary*, e. g. 'We are near friends, but we don't speak'); the Scotch proverb 'Friends agree best at a distance' corresponds to the Danish 'Frænde er frænde værst'. OE. *dwellan* or *dwelian* meant only 'to lead astray, lead into error, thwart' or intr. 'to go astray'<sup>2</sup>; the intransitive meanings, 'to tarry, abide, remain in a place', which correspond with the Scandinavian meanings, are not found till the beginning of the 18th century. OE. *plōh* is found only with the meaning of 'a measure of land' (still in Scotch *pleuch*), but in ME. it came to mean the implement *plough* (OE. *sulh*) as in ON. *plógr*. OE. *holm* meant 'ocean', but the modern word owes its signification of 'islet, flat ground by a river' to Scandinavian *holmr*.

72. These were cases of native words conforming to foreign speech habits; in other instances the Scandinavians were able to place words at the disposal of the English which agreed so well with other native words as to be readily associated with them, nay which were felt to be fitter expressions for the ideas than the Old English words and therefore survived. *Death* (*deap*) and *dead* are OE. words, but the corresponding verbs were *steorfan* and *sweltan*; now it is obvious that Danish

<sup>1</sup> Saxon Chron. 1135, which is given in the NED. as an instance of this meaning, appears to me to be doubtful.

<sup>2</sup> *Dwelode*, in Ælfnc, *Homilies* 1 384, is wrongly translated by Thorpe 'continued', so that Kluge is wrong in giving this passage as the earliest instance of the modern meaning, it means 'wandered, went astray'.

*deya* (now *dø*) was more easily associated with the noun and the adjective than the old verbs, and accordingly it was soon adopted (*deyen*, now *die*), while *sweltan* was discarded and the other verb acquired the more special signification of *starving*. *Sæte*, Mod. E. *seat*, was adopted because it was at once associated with the verbs *to sit* and *to set*. The most important importation of this kind was that of the pronominal forms *they*, *them* and *their*, which entered readily into the system of English pronouns beginning with the same sound (*the*, *that*, *this*) and were felt to be more distinct than the old native forms which they supplanted. Indeed these were liable to constant confusion with some forms of the singular number (*he*, *him*, *her*) after the vowels had become obscured, so that *he* and *hie*, *him* and *heom*, *her* (*hire*) and *heora* could no longer be kept easily apart. We thus find the obscured form, which was written *a* (or *'a*), in use for 'he' till the beginning of the 16th century (compare the dialectal use, for instance in Tennyson's 'But Parson a cooms an' a goas'), and in use for 'she' and for 'they' till the end of the 14th century. Such a state of things would naturally cause a great number of ambiguities; but although the *th*-forms must consequently be reckoned a great advantage to the language, it took a long time before the old forms were finally displaced, nay, the dative *hem* still survives in the form *'em* ('take 'em'), which is now by people ignorant of the history of the language taken to be a shortened *them*; *her* 'their' is the only form for the possessive of the plural found in Chaucer (who says *they* in the nominative) and there are two or three instances in Shakespeare. One more Scandinavian pronoun is *same*, which was speedily associated with the native adverb *same* (*swa same* 'similarly'). Other words similarly connected with the native stock are *want* (adj. and vb.), which reminded the English of their own *wan* 'wanting', *wana* 'want' and *wanran* 'wane, lessen', and *ill*, which must have appeared like a stunted form of *evil*, especially to a

Scotchman who had made his own *devil* into *deil* and *even* into *ein*.

73. If now we try to find out by means of the loan-word test (see above, § 81) what were the spheres of human knowledge or activity in which the Scandinavians were able to teach the English, the first thing that strikes us is that the very earliest stratum of loan-words<sup>1</sup>, words which by the way were soon to disappear again from the language<sup>2</sup>, relate to war and more particularly to the navy: *orrest* 'battle', *fylcian* 'to collect, marshal', *liþ* 'fleet', *barda*, *cnear*, *scægþ* different sorts of warships, *ha* 'rowlock'. This agrees perfectly well with what the Saxon Chronicle relates about the English being inferior to the heathen in ship-building, until King Alfred undertook to construct a new kind of warships.<sup>3</sup>

74. Next, we find a great many Scandinavian law-terms; they have been examined by Professor Steenstrup in his well-known work on 'Danelag'.<sup>4</sup> He has there been able, in an astonishing number of cases, to show conclusively that the vikings modified the legal ideas of the Anglo-Saxons, and that numerous new law-terms sprang up at the time of the Scandinavian settlements which had previously been utterly unknown. Most of them were simply the Danish or Norse words, others were Anglicizings, as when ON. *vapnatak* was made into *wæpnagetæc* (later *wapentake*) or when ON. *heimsokn* appears as *hamsocn* 'house-breaking or the fine for that offence', or *saklauss* as *sacleas* 'innocent'. The most important of these juridical imports is the word *law* itself, known in England from

1 See Björkman, p. 5.

2 They were naturally supplanted by French words, see below.

3 ON. *bāt* (boat) is generally supposed to be borrowed from OE. *bāt*, but according to E. Wadstein, *Friserna och forntida handelsvägar* (Göteborg 1920) both were borrowed from Frisian. The latest treatment of this phonetically difficult word is by J. Sverdrup (*Maal og minne* 1922), who thinks that it is a native Scandinavian word.

4 Copenhagen 1882 (= Normannerne IV).



the 10th century in the form *lagu*, which must have been the exact Scandinavian form, as it is the direct fore-runner of the ON. form *lög*, ODan. *logh*<sup>1</sup>. *By-law* is now felt to be a compound of the preposition *by* and *law*, but originally *by* was the Danish *by* 'town, village' (found in Derby, Whitby, etc.), and the Danish genitive-ending is preserved in the other English form *byr-law*. Other words belonging to this class are *niding* 'criminal, wretch', *thriding* 'third part', preserved in the mutilated form *riding*<sup>2</sup>, *carlman* 'man' as opposed to woman, *bonda* or *bunda* 'peasant', *lysing* 'freedman', *Jræll*, Mod. *thrall*, *mal* 'suit, agreement', *wiþermal* 'counterplea, defence', *seht* 'agreement', *stefnan* 'summon', *craſian* now *crave*, *landcop* or anglicized *landceap* and *lahcop* or *lahceap* (for the signification see Steenstrup p. 192ff); *ran* 'robbery'; *inſangenþeof* later *inſangthief* 'jurisdiction over a thief apprehended within the manor'. It will be seen that with the exception of *law*, *bylaw*, *thrall* and *crave* — the least juridical of them all — these Danish law-terms have disappeared from the language as a simple consequence of the Norman conquerors taking into their own hands the courts of justice and legal affairs generally. Steenstrup's research, which is largely based on linguistic facts, may be thus summarized. The Scandinavian settlers re-organized the administration of the realm and based it on a uniform and equable division of the country; taxes were imposed and collected after the Scandinavian pattern; instead of the lenient criminal law of former times, a virile and powerful law was introduced which was better capable of intimidating fierce and violent natures. More stress was laid on personal honour, as

1 The OE. word was *æ* or *æw*, which meant 'marriage' as well and was restricted to that sense in late OE., until it was displaced by the French word.

2 *North-thriding* being heard as *North-riding*, in the case of the two other ridings of Yorkshire, *East-thriding* and *West-thriding*, the *th*-sound was assimilated to the preceding *t*, the result in all three cases being the same misdivision of the word ('metanalysis').

when a sharp line was drawn between stealthy or clandestine crimes and open crimes attributable to obstinacy or vindictiveness. Commerce, too, was regulated so as to secure trade.

75. Apart from these legal words it would be very difficult to point out any single group of words belonging to one and the same sphere from which a superiority of any description might be concluded. *Window* is borrowed from *vindauga* ('wind-eye'); but we dare not infer that the northern settlers taught the English anything in architecture, for the word stands quite alone; besides, OE. had another word for 'window', which is also based on the eye-shape of the windows in the old wooden houses: *eagþyrel* 'eye-hole' (cf. *nosþyrel* nostril).<sup>1</sup> Nor does the borrowing of *steak*, ME. *steyke* from ON. *steik* prove any superior cooking on the part of the vikings. But it is possible that the Scandinavian *knives* (ME. *knif* from Scand. *knif*) were better than or at any rate different from those of other nations, for the word was introduced into French (*canif*) as well as into English.

76. If, then, we go through the lists of loan-words, looking out for words from which conclusions as to the state of culture of the two nations might be drawn, we shall be doomed to disappointment, for they all seem to denote objects and actions of the most commonplace description and certainly do not represent any new set of ideas hitherto unknown to the people adopting them. We find such everyday nouns as *husband*, *fellow*, *sky*, *skull*, *skin*, *wing*, *haven*, *root*, *skill*, *anger*, *gate*<sup>2</sup>, etc. Among the adjectives adopted from

<sup>1</sup> Most European languages use the Lat. *fenestra* (G *fenster*, Dutch *venster*, Welsh *fffenester*), which was also imported from French into English as *fenester*, in use from 1290 to 1548. Slavic languages have *okno*, derived from *oko* 'eye'. On the eye-shape of old windows see R. Meringer, *Indogerm. Forschungen* XVI 1904, p. 125.

<sup>2</sup> *Gate* 'way, road, street', frequent in some northern towns in the names of streets, frequent also in ME. adverbial phrases *algate*,

Scand. we find *meek, low, scant, loose, odd<sup>1</sup>, wrong, ill, ugly, rotten*. The impression produced perhaps by this list that only unpleasant adjectives came into English from Scandinavia, is easily shown to be wrong, for *happy* and *seemly* too are derived from Danish roots, not to speak of *stor*, which was common in Middle English for 'great', and dialectal adjectives like *glegg* 'clear-sighted, clever', *heppen* 'neat, tidy', *gain* 'direct, handy', (Sc. and North E. the gainest way, ON. hinn gegnsta veg, Dan. den genneste vej). The only thing common to the adjectives then, is seen to be their extreme commonplaceness, and the same impression is confirmed by the verbs, as for instance, *thrive, die, cast, hit, take, call, want, scare, scrape, scream, scrub, scowl, skulk, bask, drown, ransack, gape, guess* (doubtful), etc. To these must be added numerous words preserved only in dialects (north country and Scotch) such as *lathe* 'barn' Dan. *lade*, *hoast* 'cough' Dan. *hoste*, *flit* 'move' Dan. *flytte*, *gar* 'make, do' Dan. *gore*, *loit* 'search for' Dan. *lede*, *red up* 'to tidy' Dan. *rydde op*, *keek in* 'peep in', *ket* 'carriion, horseflesh, tainted flesh, rubbish', originally 'flesh, meat' as Dan. *kød*, etc., all of them words belonging to the same familiar sphere, and having nothing about them that might be called technical or indicative of a higher culture. The same is true of that large class of words which have been mentioned above (§ 65—72), where the Scandinavians did not properly bring the word itself, but modified either the form or the signification of a native word; among them we have seen such everyday words as *get, give, sister, loose, birth, awe, bread, dream*, etc.<sup>2</sup> It is precisely the most indispensable elements of the language

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*anothergate(s)* (corrupted into *anotherguess*), etc. In the sense 'manner of going' it is now spelt *gait*.

1 Cf. North-Jutland dialect (Vendsyssel) *of* 'odd (number)'.

2 It is noticeable, too, that the native word *heaven* has been more and more restricted to the figurative and religious acceptation, while *sky* is used of the visible firmament, a meaning it has in Jutlandish dialects: the ordinary Danish meaning is 'cloud'.

that have undergone the strongest Scandinavian influence, and this is raised into certainty when we discover that a certain number of those grammatical words, the small coin of language, which Chinese grammarians term 'empty words', and which are nowhere else transferred from one language to another, have been taken over from Danish into English: pronouns like *they*, *them*, *their*, *the same* and probably *both*; a modal verb like Scotch *maun*, *mun* (ON. *munu*, Dan. *mon*, *monne*); comparatives like *minne* 'lesser', *min* 'less', *helder* 'rather'; pronominal adverbs like *hethen*, *thethen*, *whethen* 'hence, thence, whence', *samen* 'together'; conjunctions like *though*, *oc* 'and', *sum*, which for a long time seemed likely to displace the native *swa* (*so*) after a comparison, until it was itself displaced by *eallswa* > *as*; prepositions like *fro* and *till* (see above § 64).<sup>1</sup>

77. It is obvious that all these non-technical words can show us nothing about mental or industrial superiority; they do not bear witness to the currents of civilization; what was denoted by them cannot have been new to the English; we have here no new ideas, only new names. Does that mean, then, that the loan-word test which we are able to apply elsewhere, fails in this one case, and that linguistic facts can tell us nothing about the reciprocal relations of the two races? No; on the contrary, the suggestiveness of these loans leaves nothing to be desired, they are historically significant enough. If the English loan-words in this period extend to spheres where other languages do not borrow, if the Scandinavian and the English languages were woven more intimately together, the reason must be a more intimate fusion of the two nations than is seen anywhere else. They fought like brothers and afterwards settled down peaceably, like brothers, side by side. The numbers of the Danish and Norwegian

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<sup>1</sup> Another preposition, *umbe*, was probably to a large extent due to Scandinavian, the native form being *ymbe*, *embe*; but perhaps in some texts *u* in *umbe* may represent the vowel [y].

settlers must have been considerable, else they would have disappeared without leaving such traces in the language.

78. It might at the first blush seem reasonable to think that what was going on among Scandinavian settlers in England was parallel to what we see going on now in the United States. But there is really no great similarity between the two cases. The language of Scandinavian and other settlers in America is often a curious mixture, but it is very important to notice that it is Danish or Norwegian, sprinkled with English words: 'han har fencet sin farm og venter en god krop' he has fenced his farm and expects a good crop; 'lad os krosse streeten' let us cross the street, 'tag det træ' take that tray; 'hun suede ham i courten for 25000 daler' etc. But this is *toto cælo* different from the English language of the middle ages. And if we do not take into account those districts where Scandinavians constitute the immense majority of the population and keep up their old speech as pure as circumstances will permit, the children or at any rate the children's children of the immigrants speak English, and very pure English too without any Danish admixture. The English language of America has no loan-words worth mentioning from the languages of the thousands and thousands of Germans, Scandinavians, French, Poles and others that have settled there. Nor are the reasons far to seek.<sup>1</sup> The immigrants come in small groups and find their predecessors half, or more than half, Americanized; those belonging to the same country cannot, accordingly, maintain their nationality collectively; they come in order to gain a livelihood, generally in subordinate positions where it is important to each of them separately to be as little different as possible from his new surroundings, in garb, in manners, and in language.

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<sup>1</sup> See G. Hempl's paper on *Language-Rivalry* quoted above, p. 85. Hempl's very short mention of the Scandinavians in England is, perhaps, the least satisfactory portion of his paper; none of his classes apply to our case.

The faults each individual commits in talking English, therefore, can have no consequences of lasting importance, and at any rate his children are in most respects situated like the children of the natives and learn the same language in essentially the same manner. In old times, of course, many a Dane in England would speak his mother-tongue with a large admixture of English, but that has no significance in linguistic history, for in course of time the descendants of the immigrants would no longer learn Scandinavian as their mother-tongue, but English. But that which is important, is the fact of the English themselves intermingling their own native speech with Scandinavian elements. Now the manner in which this is done shows us that the culture or civilization of the Scandinavian settlers cannot have been of a higher order than that of the English, for then we should have seen in the loan-words special groups of technical terms indicative of this superiority. Neither can their state of culture have been much inferior to that of the English, for in that case they would have adopted the language of the natives without appreciably influencing it. This is what happened with the Goths in Spain, with the Franks in France and with the Danes in Normandy, in all of which cases the Germanic tongues were absorbed into the Romanic languages.<sup>1</sup> It is true that the Scandinavians were, for a short time at least, the rulers of England, and we have found in the juridical loan-

1 It is instructive to contrast the old speech-mixture in England with what has been going on for the last two centuries in the Shetland Islands. Here the old Norwegian dialect ('Norn') has perished as a consequence of the natives considering it more genteel to speak English (Scotch). All common words of their speech now are English, but they have retained a certain number of Norn words, all of them technical, denoting different species of fish, fishing implements small parts of the boat or of the house and its primitive furniture, those signs in clouds, etc., from which the weather was forecast at sea, technicalities of sheep rearing, nicknames for things which appear to them ludicrous or ridiculous, etc. — all of them significant of the language of a subjugated and poor population. (J. Jakobsen. *Det norrøne språk på Shetland*, Copenhagen 1897.)

words linguistic corroboration of this fact; but the great majority of the settlers did not belong to the ruling class. Their social standing must have been, on the whole, slightly superior to the average of the English, but the difference cannot have been great, for the bulk of Scandinavian words are of a purely democratic character. This is clearly brought out by a comparison with the French words introduced in the following centuries, for here language confirms what history tells us, that the French represent the rich, the ruling, the refined, the aristocratic element in the English nation. How different is the impression made by the Scandinavian loan-words. They are homely expressions for things and actions of everyday importance; their character is utterly democratic. The difference is also shown by so many of the French words having never penetrated into the speech of the people, so that they have been known and used only by the 'upper ten', while the Scandinavian ones are used by high and low alike; their shortness too agrees with the monosyllabic character of the native stock of words, consequently they are far less felt as foreign elements than many French words; in fact, in many statistical calculations of the proportion of native to imported words in English, Scandinavian words have been more or less inadvertently included in the native elements. Just as it is impossible to speak or write in English about higher intellectual or emotional subjects or about fashionable mundane matters without drawing largely upon the French (and Latin) elements, in the same manner Scandinavian words will crop up together with the Anglo-Saxon ones in any conversation on the thousand nothings of daily life or on the five or six things of paramount importance to high and low alike. An Englishman cannot *thrive* or be *ill* or *die* without Scandinavian words; they are to the language what *bread* and *eggs* are to the daily fare. To this element of his language an Englishman might apply what Wordsworth says of the daisy:

Thou unassuming common-place  
 Of Nature, with that homely face  
 And yet with something of a grace  
 Which Love makes for thee! —

79. The form in which the words were borrowed occasions very few remarks. Those nouns which in Scand. had the nominative ending *-r*, did not keep it, the kernel only of the word (= accus.) being taken over. In one instance the Norse genitive-ending appears in English; the Norse phrase *á náttar þeli* 'in the middle of the night' (*þel* means 'power, strength') was Anglicized into *on nighter tale* (Cursor Mundi), or *bi nighter tale* (Havelock, Chaucer etc.). The *-t* in neuters of adjectives, that distinctive Scandinavian trait, is found in *scant*<sup>1</sup>, *want* and (*a*)*thwart*. Most Norse verbs have the weak inflexion in English, as might be expected (e. g. *die*, which in Old Scand. was a strong verb), but there are some noteworthy exceptions, *take*, *rive*, *thrive*, that are strongly inflected as in Scand. There is at least one interesting word with the Scand. passive voice in *-sk* (from the reflexive pronoun *sik*): *busk*<sup>2</sup> (and *bask*<sup>3</sup>?) but in English they are treated like active forms. The shortness of the *sk*-forms may have led to their being taken over as inseparable wholes, for ON. *þólask* and *þrívask* lost the reflexive ending in English *addle* 'acquire, earn' and *thrive*.<sup>4</sup>

As the Scandinavians and the English could understand one another without much difficulty it was natural that many niceties of grammar should be sacrificed, the intelligibility of either tongue coming to depend mainly on its mere vocabulary.<sup>5</sup> So when we

1 Properly *skammt*, neuter of *skammr* 'short'; the derived verb *skemta*, Dan. *skemte* 'joke' is found in ME. *skenten*.

2 ON. *búa-sk* 'prepare oneself'

3 ON. *baða-sk* 'bathe oneself' (doubtful)

4 On the form of Scandinavian words see also Ekwall, *Anglia Beiblatt* 21. 47.

5 Jespersen, *Chapters on English* p 37 Compare the explanation of the similar simplification of Dutch in South Africa given by H. Meyer, *Die Sprache der Buren* (Göttingen 1901), p 16. — E. Clas-



find that the wearing away and levelling of grammatical forms in the regions in which the Danes chiefly settled was a couple of centuries in advance of the same process in the more southern parts of the country, the conclusion does not seem unwarrantable that this acceleration of the tempo of linguistic simplification is due to the settlers, who did not care to learn English correctly in every minute particular and who certainly needed no such accuracy in order to make themselves understood.

80. With regard to syntax our want of adequate early texts in Scandinavia as well as in North England makes it impossible for us to state anything very definite; but the nature of those loans which we are able to verify, warrants the conclusion that the intimate fusion of the two languages must certainly have influenced syntactical relations, and when we find in later times numerous striking correspondences between English and Danish, it seems probable that some at least of them date from the viking settlements. It is true, for instance, that relative clauses without any pronoun are found in very rare cases in Old English; but they do not become common till the Middle English period, when they abound; the use of these clauses is subject to the same restrictions in both languages, so that in ninety out of a hundred instances where an Englishman leaves out the relative pronoun, a Dane would be able to do likewise, and vice versa. The rules for the omission or retention of the conjunction *that* are nearly identical. The use of *will* and *shall* in Middle English corresponds pretty nearly with Scandinavian; if in Old English an auxiliary was used to express futurity, it was generally *sceal*, just as in modern Dutch (*zal*); *wile* was rare. In Modern English the older rules have been greatly modified, but in many cases where English commentators on Shakespeare note di-

sen, *Mod Language Review* 14 94 thinks that the prevalence of the plural ending *-s* over *-n* is due to the Danes, who had no pl. in *-n*, and whose *-r* was similar to *s*.

## Chapter VIII.

### Native Resources.

164. However important foreign loan-words are, the chief enrichment of the language is due to those regular processes which are so familiar that any new word formed by means of them seems at once an old acquaintance. The whole history of English word-formation may be summed up as follows — that some formative elements have been gradually discarded, especially those that presented some difficulty of application, while others have been continually gaining ground, because they have admitted of being added to all or nearly all words without occasioning any change in the kernel of the word. Among the former I shall mention *-en* to denote female beings (cf. German *-in*). In Old English this had already become very impracticable because sound changes had occurred which obscured the connexion between related words. Corresponding to the masculine *þegn* 'retainer', *þeow* 'slave', *wealh* 'foreigner', *scealc* 'servant', *fox*, we find the feminine *þignen þrewen*, *wielen*, *scielen*, *fyxen*. It seems clear that new generations would find difficulties in forming new feminines on such indistinct analogies, so we cannot wonder that the ending ceased to be productive and that the French ending *-ess*, which presented no difficulties, came to be used extensively (107). Of the words in *-en* mentioned, *fyxen* is the only one surviving, and its connexion with *fox* is now loosened, both through the form *vixen* (with its *v* from Southern dialects) and through the meaning, which is now most often 'a quarrelsome woman'.

**165.** A much more brilliant destiny was reserved for the Old English ending *-isc*. At first it was added only to nouns indicating nations, whose vowel it changed by mutation; thus *Englisc*, now *English*, from *Angle*, etc. In some adjectives, however, no mutation was possible, e. g. *Irish*, and by analogy the vowel of the primitive word was soon introduced into some of the adjectives, e. g. *Scottish* (earlier *Scyttisc*), *Danish* (earlier *Denisc*). The ending was extended first to words whose meaning was cognate to these national names, *heathenish*, OE. *folcisc* or *þeodisc* 'national' (from *folc* or *þeod* 'people'); then gradually came *childish*, *churlish*, etc. Each century added new extensions, *foolish* and *feverish*, for instance, date from the fourteenth, and *boyish* and *girlish* from the sixteenth century, until now *-ish* can be added to nearly any noun and adjective (*swinish*, *bookish*, *greenish*, *biggish*, etc.).

**166.** We shall see in a later section (§ 206) that the ending *-ing* has still more noticeably broken the bounds of its originally narrow sphere of application. Another case in point is the verbal suffix *-en*. It is now possible to form a verb from any adjective fulfilling certain phonetic conditions by adding *-en* (*harden*, *weaken*, *sweeten*, *sharpen*, *lessen*). But this suffix was not used very much before 1500, indeed most of the verbs formed in *-en* belong to the last three centuries. Another extensively used ending is *-er*. Old English had various methods of forming substantives to denote agents; from the verb *huntian* 'hunt' it had the noun *hunta* 'hunter'; from *beodan* 'announce', *boda* 'messenger, herald'; from *wealdan* 'rule', *wealda*; from *beran* 'bear', *bora*; from *sceþþan* 'injure', *sceaþa*; from *weorcan* 'work', *wyrhta* 'wright' (in *wheel-wright*, etc.), though some of these were used in compounds only; some nouns were formed in *-end*: *rædend* 'ruler', *scieppend* 'creator', and others in *-ere*: *blawere* 'one who blows', *blotere* 'sacrificer', etc. But it seems as if there were many verbs from which it was impossible to form any agent-noun at all, and the reader will have noticed that even the

formation in *a* presented some difficulties, as the vowel was modified according to complicated rules. When the want of new substantives was felt, it was, therefore, more and more the ending *-ere* that was resorted to. But the curious thing is that the function of this ending was at first to make nouns, not from verbs, but from other nouns, thus OE. *bocere* 'scribe' from *boc* 'book' (already Gothic *bokareis*), compare modern *hatter*, *tinner*, *Londoner*, *New Englander*, *first-nighter*. As, however, such a word as *fisher*, OE. *fiscere*, which is derived from the noun a *fish*, OE. *fisc*, might just as well be analyzed as derived from the corresponding verb to *fish*, OE. *fiscian*, it became usual to form new agent-denoting nouns in *-er* from verbs, and in some cases these supplanted older formations (OE. *hunta*, now *hunter*). Now we do not hesitate to make new words in *er* from any verb, e. g. a *snorer*, a *sitter*, odd *comers* and *goers*, a total *abstainer*, etc. Combinations with an adverb (a *diner-out*, a *looker-on*) go back to Chaucer (A somnour is a renner up and down With mandemens for fornicacioun, D 1284), but do not seem to be very frequent before the Elizabethan period. Note also the extensive use of the suffix to denote instruments and things, as in *slipper*, *rubber*, *typewriter*, *sleeping car* (American = sleeping car). A variant of *-er* is *-eer*, which is liable, but only after *t*, to impart a disparaging meaning. This starts perhaps from *garreteer* and *pamphleteer*, hence the contemptuous *sonnetteer*, *profiteer*, famous or infamous during the war, and *patrioteering* (my *Language*, p. 388, not in NED). Another variant of *-er* is *-ster*<sup>1</sup>, which is often wrongly supposed to be a specially feminine suffix, though from the earliest times it has been used of men as well as of women, from the old *demestre*, now *deemster* or *dempster* 'a judge', and family names like *Baxter*, *Webster*, down to the more modern *punster*, *gangster*, *fibster*, *youngster*, etc. A *spinster* originally meant one who spins, but is now restricted to unmarried (old) maids. Special feminines are formed in *-stress*: *seamstress* (*sempstress*), *songstress*.

<sup>1</sup> Jespersen, *Linguistica* (Copenhagen 1933), p. 420 ff.

**167.** Other much-used suffixes for substantives are: *-ness* (goodness, truthfulness), *-dom* (Christendom, boredom, 'Swelldom', Thackeray), *-ship* (ownership, companionship, horsemanship), for adjectives: *-ly* (lordly, cowardly), *-y* (fiery, churchy, creepy), *-less* (powerless, dauntless), *-ful* (powerful, fanciful), and *-ed* (blue-eyed, good-natured, renowned, conceited, talented; 'broad-breasted; level-browed, like the horizon; — thighed and shouldered like the billows; — footed like their stealing foam', Ruskin). Prefixes of wide application are *mis-*, *un-*, *be-*, and others. By means of these formatives the English vocabulary has been and is being constantly enriched with thousands and thousands of useful new words.

**168.** There is one manner of forming verbs from nouns and vice versa which is specifically English and which is of the greatest value on account of the ease with which it is managed, namely that of making them exactly like one another. In Old English there were a certain number of verbs and nouns of the same 'root', but distinguished by the endings. Thus 'I love' through the three persons singular ran *lufie* *lufast* *lufaþ*, plural *lufiaþ*; the infinitive was *lufian*, the subjunctive *lufie*, pl. *lufien*, and the imperative was *lufa*, pl. *lufiaþ*. The substantive 'love' on the other hand was *lufu*, in the other cases *lufe*, plural *lufa* or *lufe*, *lufum*, *lufena* or *lufa*. Similarly 'to sleep' was *slæpan*, pres. *slæpe* *slæpest* *slæp(e)þ*, *slæpaþ*, subjunctive *slæpe*, *slæpen*, imperative *slæp*, *slæpaþ*, while the substantive had the forms *slæp*, *slæpe*, and *slæpes* in the singular and *slæpas*, *slæpum*, *slæpa* in the plural. If we were to give the corresponding forms used in the subsequent centuries, we should witness a gradual simplification which had as a further consequence the mutual approximation of the verbal and nominal forms. The *-m* is changed into *-n*, all the vowels of the weak syllables are levelled to one uniform *e*, the plural forms of the verbs in *-þ* give way to forms in *-n*, and all the final *n*'s eventually disappear, while in the nouns *s* is

gradually extended so that it becomes the only genitive and almost the only plural ending. The second person singular of the verbs retains its distinctive *-st*, but towards the end of the Middle English period *thou* already begins to be less used, and the polite *ye, you*, which becomes more and more universal, claims no distinctive ending in the verb. In the fifteenth century, the *e* of the endings, which had hitherto been pronounced, ceased to be sounded, and somewhat later *s* became the ordinary ending of the third person singular instead of *th*. These changes brought about the modern scheme: —

noun *love loves* — *sleep sleeps*,  
verb. *love loves* — *sleep sleeps*,

where we have perfect formal identity of the two parts of speech, only with the curious cross-relation between them that *s* is the ending of the plural in the nouns and of the singular (third person) in the verbs — an accident which might almost be taken as a device for getting an *s* into most sentences in the present tense (the lover loves; the lovers love) and for showing by the place of the *s* which of the two numbers is intended.

169. As a great many native nouns and verbs had thus come to be identical in form (e. g. *blossom, care, deal, drink, ebb, end, fathom, fight, fish, fire*), and as the same thing happened with numerous originally French words (e. g. *accord*, OFr. *acord* and *acorder*, *account, arm, blame, cause, change, charge, charm, claim, combat, comfort, copy, cost, couch*), it was quite natural that the speech-instinct should take it as a matter of course that whenever the need of a verb arose, it might be formed without any derivative ending from the corresponding substantive.<sup>1</sup> Among the innumerable nouns from

<sup>1</sup> It is often said, even by some of the most famous recent writers, that Modern English has given up the sharp division into different parts of speech which was characteristic of the earlier stages of our family of speech. This is entirely wrong: even if the same form *love* or *sleep* may be said to belong to more than one word-class, this is true of the isolated form only: in each separate

which verbs have been formed in this manner, we may mention a few: *ape*, *awe*, *cook*, *husband*, *silence*, *time*, *worship*. Nearly every word for the different parts of the body has given rise to a homonym verb, though it is true that some of them are rarely used: *eye*, *nose* (you shall nose him as you go up the staires, Hamlet), *lip* (= kiss, Shakesp.), *beard*, *tongue*, *brain* (such stuffe as madmen tongue and braine not; Shakesp. Cymbeline), *jaw* (= scold, etc.), *ear* (rare = give ear to), *chin* (American = to chatter), *arm* (= put one's arm round), *shoulder* (arms), *elbow* (one's way through the crowd), *hand*, *fist* (fisting each others throat, Shakesp.), *finger*, *thumb*, *breast* (= oppose), *body* (forth), *skin*, *stomach*, *limb* (they limb themselves, Milton), *knee* (= kneel, Shakesp.), *foot*. It would be possible in a similar way to go through a great many other categories of words; everywhere we should see the same facility of forming new verbs from substantives.

170. The process is also very often resorted to for 'nonce-words' in speaking and in writing. Thus, a common form of retort is exemplified by the following quotations: 'Trinkets! a bauble for Lydia! . . . So this was the history of his trinkets! I'll *bauble* him!' (Sheridan, Rivals V. 2). 'I was explaining the Golden Bull to his Royal Highness.' 'I'll *Golden Bull* you, you rascal!' roared the Majesty of Prussia (Macaulay, Biographical Ess.). 'Such a savage as that, as has just come home from South Africa. Diamonds indeed! I'd *diamond* him' (Trollope, Old Man's Love) — and

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case in which the word is used in actual speech it belongs definitely to one class and to no other. The form *round* is a substantive in 'a round of the ladder', 'he took his daily round', an adjective in 'a round table', a verb in 'he failed to round the lamp-post', an adverb in 'come round to-morrow', and a preposition in 'he walked round the house'. Many people will say that in the sentence 'we tead at the vicarage' we have a case of a substantive used as a verb. The truth is that we have a real verb, just as real as *dine* or *eat*, though derived from the substantive *tea*, and derived without any distinctive ending in the infinitive. Cf *Philosophy of Grammar*, p. 52 and 61 f.

in a somewhat different manner: 'My gracious Uncle.— Tut, tut, Grace me no Grace, nor Uncle me no Uncle' (Shakesp., R 2, cf. also Romeo III. 5. 143) 'I heartily wish I could, but —' 'Nay, but me no buts — I have set my heart upon it' (Scott, Antiq. ch. XI). 'Advance and take thy prize, The diamond; but he answered, Diamond me No diamonds! For God's love, a little air! Prize me no prizes, for my prize is death' (Tennyson, Lancelot and Elaine).

171. A still more characteristic peculiarity of the English language is the corresponding freedom with which a form which was originally a verb is used unchanged as a substantive. This was not possible till the disappearance of the final *-e* which was found in most verbal forms, and accordingly we see an ever increasing number of these formations from about 1500. I shall give some examples in chronological order, adding the date of the earliest quotation for the noun in the NED.: *glance* 1503, *bend* 1529, *cut* 1580, *fetch* 1580, *hearsay* 1582, *blemish* 1585, *gaze* 1542, *reach* 1542, *drain* 1552, *gather* 1555, *burn* 1568, *lend* 1575, *dislike* 1577, *frown* 1581, *dissent* 1585, *fawn* (a servile cringe) 1590, *dismay* 1590, *embrace* 1592, *hatch* 1597, *dip* 1599, *dress* (personal attire) 1606, *flutter* 1641, *divide* 1642, *build* 1667 (before the nineteenth century apparently used by Pepys only), *harass* 1667, *haul* 1670, *dive* 1700, *go* 1727 (many of the most frequent applications date from the nineteenth century), *hobble* 1727, *lean* (the act or condition of leaning) 1776, *bid* 1788, *hang* 1797, *dig* 1819, *find* 1825 (in the sense of that which is found, 1847), *crave* 1830, *kill* (the act of killing) 1825, (a killed animal) 1878. It will be seen that the sixteenth century is very fertile in these nouns, which is only a natural consequence of the phonological reason given above. As, however, some of the verb-nouns found in Elizabethan authors have in modern times disappeared or become rare, some grammarians have inferred that we have here a phenomenon peculiar to that period and due to the general



exuberance of the Renaissance which made people more free with their language than they have since been. A glance at our list will show that this is a wrong view; indeed, we use a great many formations of this kind which were unknown to Shakespeare; he had only the substantive *a visitation*, where we say *a visit*, nor did he know our *worries*, our *kicks*, and *moves*, etc., etc.

172. In some cases a substantive is formed in this manner in spite of there being already another noun derived from the same verb; thus *a move* has nearly the same meaning as *removal*, *movement* or *motion* (from which latter a new verb *to motion* is formed); *a resolve* and *resolution*, *a laugh* and *laughter* are nearly the same thing (though an *exhibit* is only one of the things found at an *exhibition*). Hence we get a lively competition started between these substantives and forms in *-ing*: *meet* (especially in the sporting world) and *meeting*, *shoot* and *shooting*, *read* (in the afternoon I like a rest and a read) and *reading*<sup>1</sup>, *row* (let us go out for a row) and *rowing* (he goes in for rowing), *smoke* and *smoking*, *mend* and *mending*, *feel* (there was a soft feel of autumn in the air) and *feeling*. The *build* of a house and the *make* of a machine are different from the *building* of the house and the *making* of the machine. The *sit* of a coat may sometimes be spoilt at one *sitting*, and we speak of *dressing*, not of *dress*, in connexion with a salad, etc. The enormous development of these convenient differentiations belongs to the most recent period of the language. Compared with the sets of synonyms mentioned above (§ 138: one of the words borrowed from Latin, etc.) this class of synonyms shows a decided superiority, because here small differences in sense are expressed by small differences in

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<sup>1</sup> Darwin says in one of his letters: 'I have just finished, after several reads, your paper'; this implies that he did not read it from beginning to end at one sitting; if he had written 'after several readings' he would have implied that he had read it through several times.

sound, and because all these words are formed in the most regular and easy manner; consequently there is the least possible strain put on the memory.

173. In early English a noun and the verb corresponding to it were often similar, although not exactly alike, some historical reason causing a difference in either the vowel or the final consonant or both. In such pairs of words as the following the old relation is kept unchanged: a *life*, to *live*; a *calf*, to *calve*; a *grief*, to *grieve*; a *cloth*, to *clothe*; a *house*, to *house*; a *use*, to *use* — in all these the noun has the voiceless and the verb the voiced consonant. The same alternation has been imitated in a few words which had originally the same consonant in the noun as in the verb; thus *belief*, *proof*, and *excuse* (with voiceless *s*) have supplanted the older substantives in *-ve* and voiced *-se* and inversely the verb *grease* has now often voiced *s* [z] alternating with a voiceless *s*. But in a far greater number of words the tendency to have nouns and verbs of exactly the same sound has prevailed, so that we have to *knife*, to *scarf* (Shakesp.), to *elf* (id.), to *roof*, and with voiceless *s* to *loose*, to *race*, to *ice*, to *promise*, while the nouns *repose*, *cruise* (at sea), *reprieve*, owe their voiced consonants to the corresponding verbs. In this way we get some interesting doublets. Besides the old noun *bath* and verb *bathe* we have the recent verb to *bath* (will you bath baby to-day?) and the substantive *bathe* (I walked into the sea by myself and had a very decent bathe, Tennyson). Besides *glass* (noun) and *glaze* (verb) we have now also *glass* as a verb and *glaze* as a noun; so also in the case of *grass* and *graze*, *price* and *prize* (where *praise* verb and noun should be mentioned as etymologically the same word).

174. The same forces are at work in the smaller class of words, in which the distinction between the noun and the verb is made by the alternation of *ch* and *k*, as in *speech* — *speak*. Side by side with the old *batch* we have a new noun a *bake*, besides the noun *stitch* and the verb *stick* we have now also a verb to *stitch* (a book, etc.)

and the rare noun a *stick* (the act of sticking); besides the old noun *stench* we have a new one from the verb *stink*. The modern word *ache* (in toothache, etc.) is a curious cross of the old noun, whose spelling has been kept, and the old verb, whose pronunciation (with *k*) has prevailed. Baret (1573) says expressly, '*Ake* is the verb of this substantive *ache*, *ch* being turned into *k*'. In the Shakespeare folio of 1623 the noun is always spelt with *ch* and the verb with *k*; the verb rhimes with *brake* and *sake*. The noun was thus sounded like the name of the letter *h*; and Hart (An Orthographie, 1569, p. 35) says expressly, 'We abuse the name of *h*, calling it *ache*, which sounde serveth very well to expresse a headache, or some bone ache.' Indeed, the identity in sound of the noun and the name of the letter gave rise to one of the stock puns of the time; see for instance Shakespeare (Ado III. 4. 56); 'by my troth I am exceeding ill, hey ho. — For a hauke, a horse, or a husband? — For the letter that begins them all, *H*,' and a poem by Heywood: It is worst among letters in the crosse row, For if thou finde him other [= either] in thine elbow, In thine arme, or leg . . . Where ever you find ache, thou shalt not like him.'

175. Numerous substantives and verbs have the same consonants, but a difference in the vowels, due either to gradation (ablaut) or to mutation (umlaut). But here, too, the creative powers of language may be observed. Where in old times there was only a noun *bit* and a verb to *bite*, we have now in addition not only a verb to *bit* (a horse, to put the bit into its mouth) as in Carlyle's 'the accursed liag 'dyspepsia' had got me bitted and bridled' and in Coleridge's witty remark (quoted in the NED.): 'It is not women and Frenchmen only that would rather have their tongues bitten than bitted', — but also a noun *bite* in various meanings, e. g. in 'his bite is as dangerous as the cobra's' (Kipling) and 'she took a bite out of the apple' (Anthony Hope). From the noun *seat* (see above, § 72) we have the new verb to *seat* (to place on a seat), while

the verb to *sit* has given birth to the noun *sit* (cf. § 172). No longer content with the old *sale* as the substantive corresponding to *sell*, in slang we have the new noun *a* (fearful) *sell* (an imposition); cf. also the American substantive *tell* (according to their tell, see Farmer and Henley). As *knot* (n.) was to *knit* (v.), so was *coss* to *kiss*, but while of the former pair both forms have survived and have given rise to a new verb to *knot* and a new noun a *knit* (he has a permanent knit of the brow, NED.), from the latter the *o*-form has disappeared, the noun being now formed from the verb: a *kiss*. We have the old *brood* (n.) and *breed* (v.), and the new *brood* (v.) and *breed* (n.); a new verb to *blood* exists by the side of the old to *bleed*, and a new noun *feed* by the side of the old *food*. It is obvious that the language has been enriched by acquiring all these newly formed words; but it should also be admitted that there has been a positive gain in ease and simplicity in all those cases where there was no occasion for turning the existing phonetic difference to account by creating new verbs or nouns in new significations, and where, accordingly, one of the phonetic forms has simply disappeared, as when the old verbs *snwan*, *scrydan*, *swierman* have given way to the new *snow*, *shroud*, *swarm*, which are like the nouns, or when the noun *swat*, *swot* (he swette blodes swot, Ancrène Riwle) has been discarded in favour of *sweat*, which has the same vowel as the verb.

176. In some cases the place of the stress serves to distinguish substantives from verbs, the former having initial and the latter final stress. Thus some native words with prefixes: *'forecast* sb., *fore'cast* vb., similarly *overthrow*, *underline*. In the same way a great many Romanic words are differentiated, the substantives (adjectives) having fore-stress, the corresponding verbs end-stress: e. g. *absent*, *accent*, *conduct*, *frequent*, *object*, *present*, *rebel*, *record*, *subject*, *interdict*. Words like *compliment*, *experiment* have an obscure vowel [ə] in the sb., but a full vowel [e] in the vb., even if the final syllable has not full stress.

177. Among the other points of interest presented by the formations occupying us here I may mention the curious oscillation found in some instances between noun and verb. *Smoke* is first a noun (the smoke from the chimney), then a verb (the chimney smokes, he smokes a pipe); then a new noun is formed from the verb in the last sense (let us have a smoke). Similarly *gossip* (a) noun: godfather, intimate friend, idle talker, (b) verb: to talk idly, (c) new noun: idle talk; *dart* (a) a weapon, (b) to throw (a dart), to move rapidly (like a dart), (c) a sudden motion; *brush* (a) an instrument, (b) to use that instrument, (c) the action of using it: your hat wants a brush; *sail* (a) a piece of canvas, (b) to sail, (c) a sailing excursion; *wire* (a) a metallic thread, (b) to telegraph, (c) a telegram; so also *cable*; in vulgar language a verb is formed to *jaw* and from that a second noun a *jaw* ('what speech do you mean?' 'Why that grand jaw that you sputtered forth just now about reputation,' F. C. Philips). Sometimes the starting point is a verb, e. g. *frame* (a) to form, (b) noun: a fabric, a border for a picture, etc., (c) verb: to set in a frame; and sometimes an adjective, e. g. *faint* (a) weak, (b) to become weak, (c) a fainting fit.

178. To those who might see in the obliteration of the old distinctive marks of the different parts of speech a danger of ambiguity, I would answer that this danger is more imaginary than real. I open at random a modern novel and count on one page 34 nouns which can be used as infinitives without any change, and 38 verbs the forms of which can be used as nouns<sup>1</sup>, while only 22 nouns and 9 verbs cannot be thus used. As some of the ambiguous nouns and verbs

<sup>1</sup> Answer, brother, reply, father, room, key, haste, gate, time, head, pavement, man, waste, truth, thunder, clap, storey, bed, book, night, face, point, shame, while, eye, top, hook, finger, bell, land, lamp, taper, shelf, church, — whisper, wait, return, go, keep, call, look, leave, reproach, do, pass, come, cry, open, sing, fall, hurry, reach, snatch, lie, regard, creep, lend, say, try, steal, hold, swell, wonder, interest, see, choke, shake, place, escape, ring, take, light. (I have not counted auxiliary verbs.)

occur more than once, and as the same page contains adverbs, prepositions, and conjunctions<sup>1</sup> which are identical with nouns (adjectives) or verbs, or both, the theoretical possibilities of mistakes arising from confusion of parts of speech would seem to be very numerous. And yet no one reading that page would feel the slightest hesitation about understanding every word correctly, as either the ending or the context shows at once whether a verb is meant or not. Even such an extreme case as this line, which is actually found in a modern song, 'Her eyes like angels watch them still' is not obscure, although *her* might be both accusative and possessive, *eyes* both noun and verb, *like* adjective, conjunction, and verb, *watch* noun and verb, and *still* adjective, verb and adverb. A modern Englishman, realizing the great advantage his language possesses in its power of making words serve in new functions, might make Shakespeare's lines his own in a different sense:

'So all my best is dressing old words new,  
Spending again what is already spent'.<sup>2</sup>

179. Word-composition plays a very important part in English. Compounds are either fixed or free, i. e. such that when the need arises any speaker can form new compounds after the pattern of already existing combinations. The former tend to be felt as independent units, isolated from the component parts in sound and (or) in meaning. *Daisy* was originally *dayes eye*, but no one nowadays connects the word with either *day* or *eye*. *Woman* was originally *wif + man*; a reminder of the [i]-sound is kept in the plural *women*; *nostril*, OE. *nosu-þyrel* (the latter part means 'hole'), *fifteen*, *Monday*, *Christmas* show shortening of the first element as compared with *nose*, *five*, *moon*, *Christ*. Compare the treatment of the second element in the numerous place-names in *-ton*, from *town*, and in *-mouth*, pronounced [-mʌp]. *Cupboard* is pronounced [kʌbəd]. Some-

<sup>1</sup> Back, down, still, out, home, except, like, while, straight.

<sup>2</sup> Sonnet 76.

times there is re-composition as a reaction against isolation: OE. *hūs + wif* in course of time lost *w*, both vowels were shortened, *s* was sounded [z], and *f* became *v* or was even lost; in the derived meanings 'needle-case' and 'jade' we find the forms *huzziſ*, *huzziſe*, and *huzziy*. But in the original sense the word was constantly revived: *housewife*. — With free compounds we may have even long strings, like *railway refreshment room*, *New Year Eve fancy dress ball*, his *twopence a week pocket-money*, etc.

180. With regard to the logical relation of the parts of a compound very few are of the same type as *tiptoe* = tip of the toe. In the majority the first part determines the second: a *garden flower* is a kind of flower, but a *flower garden* a kind of garden. The relation of the two parts may be very different and is left to be inferred from the meaning of each. Compare for instance *life-boat* on the one hand with *life-insurance*, *life member*, *lifetime*, *life class* (class of painters drawing from life) and on the other hand *steamboat*, *pilot boat*, *iron boat*, etc. *Home letters* (from h.), *home voyage* (to), *home life* (at). Sometimes a compound means 'at the same time A and B': *servantman* = *man servant*, *queen-dowager*, *deaf-mute* = deaf and dumb.

181. A special type of compounds is exemplified in *pick-pocket* = 'one who picks pockets'. This type (verb + object) seems to have originated in Romanic languages, but has in modern times proved very fertile in English: *cut-purse*, *know-nothing*, *sawbones*, *breakwater*, *stopgap*, *scare-crow*, etc. Such compounds are very often used as first parts of new compounds, in which case they may be considered adjectives: *break-neck* pace, a very *tell-tale* face, a *lack-lustre* eye, a *make-shift* dinner.<sup>1</sup>

182. While in the old type of fixed compounds the first part had strong and the second weak stress, the stress tends in free compounds, such as *gold coin*, *coat tail*, *lead pencil*, *headmaster*, to be more level, so that it often varies rhythmically according to the context.

<sup>1</sup> MEG. II 8. 6 and 14. 7.

Each part of the compound is felt as independent of and of equal weight with the other. As an adjective before a substantive is now just as uninflected as a substantive forming the first part of a compound, the two combinations are also made syntactically equal. They are co-ordinated in 'her Christian and *family* name', 'all national, *State, county, and municipal* offices', 'a *Boston* young lady'. The prop-word *one* may be used as in 'two *gold* watches and a *silver* one', 'give me a paper, one of the *Sunday* ones'. The likeness with adjectives is made even more obvious when an adverb is used as in 'from a too exclusively *London* standpoint', 'in purely *Government* work', 'in the most *matter-of-fact* way'. From being often used as first parts of compounds some substantives have really become regular adjectives and are recognized as such by everybody: *chief, choice, commonplace*; they may even form adverbs: *choicely*, and substantives like *commonplaceness*. *Dainty*, originally a substantive meaning a delicacy (Old French *daintie* from L. *dignitatem*), and *bridal* (originally *bryde-ale* 'bride-ale') are now practically nothing but adjectives: note in both their seemingly adjectival endings.<sup>1</sup>

183. Having thus considered the modes of forming new words by adding something to existing words, by adding to them nothing at all, and by composition, we shall end this chapter by some remarks on the formation of new words by subtracting something from old ones.<sup>2</sup> Such 'back-formations', as they are very conveniently termed by Dr. Murray, owe their origin to one part of a word being mistaken for some derivative suffix (or, more rarely, prefix). The adverbs *sideling, groveling* and *darkling* were originally formed by means of the adverbial ending *-ling*, but in such phrases as *he walks sideling, he lies groveling*, etc., they looked exactly like

<sup>1</sup> See MEG. II ch. XI

<sup>2</sup> Otto Jespersen, *Om subtraktionsdannelser, særligt på dansk og engelsk*, in *Festskrift til Vilh. Thomsen* Copenhagen 1894. I have treated a few classes of back-formations in *Engl. Studien* 70, p. 117 ff. On the subtraction of *s*, as if it were a plural sign, see below, § 198.



participles in *-ing*, and the consequence was that the new verbs to *sidle*, to *grovel*, and to *darkle* were derived from them by the subtraction of *-ing*. The *Banting* cure was named after one Mr. Banting; the occasional verb to *bant* is, accordingly, a back-formation. The ending *-y* is often subtracted; from *greedy* is thus formed the noun *greed* (about 1600), from *lazy* and *cosy* the two verbs *laze* and *cose* (Kingsley), and from *jeopardy* (French *jeu parti*) the verb *jeopard*. The old adjective corresponding to *difficulty* was *difficile* as in French, but about 1600 the adjective *difficult* (= the noun minus *y*) makes its appearance. *Puppy* from French *poupée* was thought to be formed by means of the petting suffix *y*, and thus *pup* was created; similarly I think that *cad* is from *caddy*, *caddie* = Fr. *cadet* (a youngster) and *pet* from *petty* = Fr. *petit*, the transition in meaning from 'little' to 'favourite' being easily accounted for. Several verbs originate from nouns in *-er* (*-ar*, *-or*), which were not originally 'agent nouns'; *butcher* is the French *boucher*, derived from *bouc* 'a buck, goat' with no corresponding verb, but in English it has given rise to the rare verb to *butch* and to the noun a *butch-knife*. Similarly *harbinger*, *rover*, *pedlar*, *burglar*, *hawker*, and probably *beggar*, call into existence the verbs to *harbinger* (Whitman), *rove*, *peddle*, *burgle*, *hawk*, and *beg*; and the Latin words *editor*, *donator*, *vivisector*, produce the un-Latin verbs to *edit*, *donate* (American), *vivisect* (Meredith), etc. which look as if they came from Latin participles.<sup>1</sup> Some of these back-formations have been more successful than others in being generally recognized in Standard English.

184. It is not usual in Germanic languages to form compounds with a verb as the second, and an object or a predicative as the first, part. Hence, when we find such verbs as to *housekeep* (Kipling, Merriman), the explanation must be that *-er* has been subtracted from the perfectly legitimate noun a *housekeeper* (or *-ing* from *housekeeping*). The oldest examples I know of this formation are to *backbite* (1300), to *partake* (parttake, 16th c.)

and to *soothsay* and *conycatch* (Shakesp.); others are to *hutkeep*, common in Australia, *book-keep* (Shaw), to *dressmake*, to *matchmake* (women will match-make, you know, A. Hope), to *thoughtread* (Why don't they thoughtread each other? H. G. Wells), to *typewrite* (I could typewrite if I had a machine, id., also in B. Shaw's *Candida*), to *merrymake* (you merrymake together, Du Maurier) It will be seen that most of these are nonce-words. The verbs to *henpeck* and to *sunburn* are back-formations from the participles *henpecked* and *sunburnt*; and Browning even says '*moonstrike* him!' (Pippa Passes) for 'let him be moonstruck'.

185. We have seen (§ 7 ff.) that monosyllabism is one of the most characteristic features of modern English, and this chapter has shown us some of the morphological processes by which the original stock of monosyllables has been in course of time considerably increased. It may not, therefore, be out of place here briefly to give an account of some of the other modes by which such short words have been developed. Some are simply longer words which have been shortened by regular phonetic development (cf. *love* § 168); e. g. *eight* OE. *eahta*, *dear* OE. *deore*, *fowl* OE. *fugol*, *hawk* OE. *hafoc*, *lord* OE. *hlaford*, *not* and *nought* OE. *nawiht*, *pence* OE. *penigas*, *ant* OE. *æmette*, etc. *Miss* before the names of unmarried ladies is a somewhat irregular shortening of 'missis' (mistress); though found here and there in the seventeenth century, *Miss* was not yet recognized in the middle of the eighteenth century (cf. Fielding's *Mrs. Bridgit*, *Mrs. Honour*, etc.).

186. This leads us to the numerous popular clippings of long foreign words, of which rarely the middle (as in *Tench* 'the House of *Detention*' and *teck* 'detective') or the end (as in *bus* 'omnibus', *baccor*, *baccy* 'tobacco', *phone* 'telephone'), but more often the beginning only subsists. Some of these stump-words have never passed beyond slang, such as *sov* 'sovereign', *pub* 'public-house', *conjab* 'confabulation', *pop* 'popular concert', *vet* 'veterinary surgeon', *Jap* 'Japanese',

*guy* 'Governor', *Moderations*, an Oxford examination, *matric* 'matriculation', *prep* 'preparation' and *impo* or *impo* 'imposition' in schoolboys' slang, *sup* 'super-numerary', *props* 'properties' in theatrical slang, *perks* 'perquisites', *comp* 'compositor', *caps* 'capital letters', etc. etc. Some are perhaps now in a fair way to become recognized in ordinary speech, such as *exam* 'examination', and *bike* 'bicycle'; and some words have become so firmly established as to make the full words pass completely into oblivion, e. g. *cab* (cabriolet), *fad* (fadaise), *navvy* (navigator in the sense of canal-digger and later railway labourer) and *mob* (mobile vulgus).

187. A last group of English monosyllables comprises a certain number of words the etymology of which has hitherto baffled all the endeavours of philologists. At a certain moment such a word suddenly comes into the language, nobody knowing from where, so that we must feel really inclined to think of a creation *ex nihilo*. I am not particularly thinking of words denoting sounds or movements in a more or less onomatopoeic way, for their origin is psychologically easy to account for, but of such words as the following, some of which belong now to the most indispensable speech material: *bad*<sup>1</sup>, *big*<sup>2</sup>, *lad* and *lass*, all appearing towards the end of the thirteenth century; *fit* adjective and *fit* substantive, probably two mutually independent words, the adjective dating from 1440, the substantive in the now current sense from 1547: *dad* 'father', *jump*, *crease* 'fold, wrinkle', *gloat*, and *bet* from the sixteenth century; *job*, *fun* (and *pun*), *blight*, *chum* and *hump* from the seventeenth century; *juss*, *jam* verb and substantive, and *hoax* from the eighteenth, and *slum*, *stunt* and *blurb* from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Anyone who has watched small children

1 See Zupitza's attempt at an explanation in the NED., which does not account for the origin of *bæddel*.

2 The best explanation is Björkman's, see *Scand. Loan Words* p. 157 and 259; but even he does not claim to have solved the mystery completely.

carefully must have noticed that they sometimes create some such word without any apparent reason; sometimes they stick to it only for a day or two as the name of some plaything, etc., and then forget it; but sometimes a funny sound takes lastingly their fancy and may even be adopted by their playmates or parents as a real word.<sup>1</sup> Without pretending that such is the origin of all the words just mentioned I yet venture to throw out the suggestion that some of them may be due to children's playful inventiveness — while others may have sprung from the corresponding linguistic playfulness of grown-up people which forms the fundamental essence of the phenomenon called *slang*.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf my book *Language*, p. 151 ff. On the general theory of slang see ib. 298 ff. and *Mankind, Nation and Individual*, p. 149 ff.

## Chapter IX.

### Grammar.

**188.** The preceding chapter has already brought us near to our present province or rather has crossed its boundary, for word-formation is rightly considered one of the main divisions of grammar. In the other divisions a survey of the historical development shows us the same general tendency as word-formation does (§ 164), the tendency, as we might call it, from chaos towards cosmos. Where the old language had a great many endings, most of them with very vague meanings and applications, Modern English has but few, and their sphere of signification is more definite. The number of irregularities and anomalies, so considerable in Old English, has been greatly reduced so that now the vast majority of words are inflected regularly. It has been objected that most of the old strong verbs are still strong, and that this means irregularity in the formation of the tenses: *shake shook shaken* is just as irregular as Old English *scacan scoc scacen*. But it must be remembered, first, that there is a complete disappearance of a great many of those details of inflexion, which made every Old English paradigm much more complicated than its modern successor, such as distinctions of persons and numbers, and nearly all differences between the infinitive, the imperative, the indicative, and the subjunctive, — secondly that the number of distinct vowels has been reduced in many verbs; compare thus *beran bireþ bæc bæron boren* with *bear bears bore bore born*; *feohtan fieht feaht fuhton fohten* with *fight fights fought fought*; *bindan band bunden* with *bind*

*bound bound; berstan bærst burston borsten* with *burst burst burst burst*, — and thirdly, that the consonant change found in many verbs (*ceas curon, snap̃ snidon, teah tugon*) has been abolished altogether except in the single case of *was were*. The greatest change towards simplicity and regularity is seen in the adjectives, where one form now represents the eleven different forms used by the contemporaries of Alfred. But it must not be imagined that the development has in every minute particular made for progress; nothing has been gained, for instance, by the modern creation of *mine* and *thine* as primary possessive pronouns by the side of *my* and *thy*. It is only when we compare the entire linguistic structure of some remote period with the structure in modern times that we observe that the gain in clearness and simplicity has really been enormous.

189. This grammatical development and simplification has taken place not suddenly and from one cause, but gradually and from a variety of causes, most of these the same that have worked and are working similar changes in other languages. It cannot be said that 'the chief impulse to such changes is due to progressive thinking and advancing culture which made the traditional forms insufficient for the abundance of ideas in their mutual relations' (Morsbach), for some of the changes took place with greatest rapidity in centuries when culture was at a low ebb. Chief among the general causes of the decay of the Old English apparatus of declensions and conjugations must be reckoned the manifold incongruities of the system: if the same vowel did not everywhere denote the same shade of meaning, speakers would naturally tend to indulge in the universal inclination to pronounce weak syllables indistinctly (and the OE. flexional endings were all unstressed): thus *a, i, u* of the endings were levelled in the one colourless vowel *e*, and this could even after some time be dropped altogether in most cases. The same want of system would

also favour the analogical extension of those endings which were clearest in their forms and in their sphere of employment, thus in substantives the *s*-forms both as genitives and as plurals<sup>1</sup>. But beside this general cause we must in each separate case inquire into those special causes that may have been at work, and even such a seemingly small step as that by which the old declension of *ye* (nominative) and *you* (accusative and dative) has given way to the modern use of *you* in all cases, has been the result of the activity of many moving forces. In the following sections I shall select a few points of grammar, which seem to me illustrative of the processes of change in general, and (as regards some of them) of the progressive tendency I have mentioned.

190. (I. The *s*-ending in nouns): In Old English the *genitive* was formed in *es* in most masculines and neuters, but beside this a variety of other endings were in use with the different stems, in *-e*, in *-re*, in *-an*; some words had no separate ending in the genitive, and some formed a mutation-genitive (*boc* 'book', gen. *bec*). Besides, the genitive of the plural never ended in *-s*, but in *-a* or *-ra* or *-na* (*-ena*, *-ana*). With regard to syntax, the genitive case filled a variety of functions, possessive, subjective, objective, partitive, definitive, descriptive, etc. It was used not only to connect two substantives, but also after a great number of verbs and adjectives (rejoice at, fear, long for, remember, fill, empty, weary, deprive of, etc.); it sometimes stood before and sometimes after the governing word. In short, the rules for the formation as well as for the employment of that case were complicated to a very high degree. But gradually a greater regularity and

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<sup>1</sup> This is the view I have held since 1891 and expressed more or less explicitly in various publications, see now *Language*, books III and IV, also *Chapters on English*. On the influence of speech-mixture on the rapidity of movement see above, § 79; on the rapidity of change due to wars, pestilences, etc. in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries see *Language*, p. 261.

simplicity prevailed in accidence as well as in syntax; the *s*-genitive was extended to more and more nouns and to the plural as well as the singular number, and now it is the only genitive ending used in the language, though in the plural it is in the great majority of cases hidden away behind the *s* used to denote the plural number (*kings'*, cf. *men's*). The position of the genitive now is always immediately before the governing word, and this in connexion with the regularity of the formation of the case has been instrumental in bringing about the modern group-genitive, where the *s* is tacked on to the end of a word-group with no regard to the logic of the older grammar: *the King of England's power* (formerly 'the kinges power of England'), *the bride and bridegroom's return*, *somebody else's hat* etc.<sup>1</sup>

191. As for the use of the genitive, it has been in various ways encroached upon by the combination with *of*. First, its use is now in ordinary prose almost restricted to personal beings, and even such phrases as 'society's hard-drilled soldiery' (Meredith), where *society* is personified, are felt as poetical; still more so, of course, 'thou knowst not gold's effect', (Sh.) or 'setting out upon life's journey' (Stevenson). But in some set phrases the genitive is still established, e. g. out of *harm's* way; he is at his *wits'* (or *wit's*) end; so also in the stock quotation from Hamlet, in my *mind's* eye, etc. Then to indicate measure, etc.: at a *boat's* length from the ship, and especially time: an *hour's* walk, a good *night's* rest, *yesterday's* post; and this is even extended to such prepositional combinations as *to-day's* adventures, *to-morrow's* papers.

192. Secondly, the genitive (of names of persons) is now chiefly used possessively, though this word must be taken in a very wide sense, including such cases as 'Shelley's works', 'Gainsborough's pictures', 'Tom's enemies', 'Tom's death', etc. The subjective genitive,

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<sup>1</sup> See the detailed historical account of the group-genitive, *Chapters on English* 1918 ch. III.



too, is in great vigour, for instance in 'the King's arrival', 'the Duke's invitation', 'the Duke's inviting him', 'Mrs. Poyser's repulse of the squire' (G. Eliot). Still there is, in quite recent times, a tendency towards expressing the subject by means of the preposition *by*, just as in the passive voice, for instance in 'the accidental discovery by Miss Knag of some correspondence' (Dickens); 'the appropriation by a settled community of lands on the other side of an ocean' (Seeley), 'the massacre of Christians by Chinese'. 'Forster's Life of Dickens' is the same thing as 'Dickens's Life, by Forster'. — The objective genitive was formerly much more common than now, the ambiguity of the genitive being probably the reason of its decline. Still, we find, for instance 'his expulsion from power by the Tories' (Thackeray), 'What was thy pity's recompense?' (Byron). 'England's wrongs' generally means the wrongs done to England; thus also 'my cosens wrongs' in Shakespeare's *R* 2 II. 3. 141, but 'your foule wrongs' (in the same play, III. 1. 15) means the wrongs committed by you. In 'my sceptre's awe' (*ib.* I. 1. 118) we have an objective, but in 'thy free awe pays homage to us' (*Hamlet* IV. 3. 68) a subjective genitive. But on the whole such obscurity will occur less frequently in English than in other languages, where the genitive is more freely used.

193. Now, *of* has so far prevailed that there are very few cases where a genitive cannot be replaced by it, and it is even used to supplant a possessive pronoun in such stock phrases as 'not for the death of me' (cf. Chaucer's 'the blood of me', LGW. 848). *Of* is required in a great many cases, such as 'I come here at the instance of your colleague, Dr. H. J. Henry Jekyll' (Stevenson), and it is often employed to avoid tacking on the *s* to too long a series of words, as in 'Will Wimble's is the case of many a younger brother of a great family' (Addison) or 'the wife of a clergyman of the Church of England' (Thackeray), where most Englishmen will resent the iteration of *of*'s less than they

do the repeated *s*'es in Mrs. Browning's 'all the hoofs Of King Saul's father's asses' or in Pinero's 'He is my wife's first husband's only child's godfather.' Even long strings of prepositions are tolerated, as in 'on the occasion of the coming of age of one of the youngest sons of a wealthy member of Parliament', or 'Swift's visit to London in 1707 had for its object the obtaining for the Irish Church of the surrender by the Crown of the First-Fruits and Twentieths' (Aitken) or 'that sublime conception of the Holy Father of a spiritual kingdom on earth under the sovereignty of the Vicar of Jesus Christ himself' (Hall Caine). I suppose that very few readers of the original books have found anything heavy or cumbersome in these passages, even if they may here, where their attention is drawn to the grammatical construction.

194. Speaking of the genitive, we ought also to mention the curious use in phrases like 'a friend of my brother's'. This began in the fourteenth century with such instances as 'an officere of the prefectes' (Chaucer G 868), where *officers* might be supplied (=one of the prefect's officers) and 'if that any neighebor of mine (= any of my neighbours) Wol nat in chirche to my wyf enclyne' (id. B 3091). In the course of a few centuries, the construction became more and more frequent, so that it has now long been one of the fixtures of the English language. A partitive sense is still conceivable in such phrases as 'an olde religious unckle of mine' (Sh., As III. 3. 862) = one of my uncles, though it will be seen that it is impossible to analyze it as being equal to 'one of my old religious uncles'. But it is not at all certain that *of* here from the first was partitive<sup>1</sup>; it is rather to be classed with the appositional use in *the three of us* = 'the three who are we'; *the City of Rome* = 'the City which is Rome'. The construction is used chiefly to avoid the juxtaposition of two pronouns, 'this hat of mine, that ring of yours' being preferred to 'this my hat,

<sup>1</sup> See *Mod. Engl. Grammar* III p. 15 ff.

that your ring', or of a pronoun and a genitive, as in 'any ring of Jane's', where 'any Jane's ring' or 'Jane's any ring' would be impossible; compare also 'I make it a rule of mine', 'this is no fault of Frank's', etc. In all such cases the construction was found so convenient that it is no wonder that it should soon be used extensively where no partitive sense is logically possible, as in 'nor shall [we] ever see That face of hers againe' (Shakespeare, *Lear* I. 1. 267), 'that flattering tongue of yours' (*As* IV. 1. 188), 'Time hath not yet so dried this bloud of mine' (*Ado* IV. 1. 195), 'If I had such a tyre, this face of mine Were full as lovely as is this of hers' (*Gent.* IV. 4. 190), 'this uneasy heart of ours' (Wordsworth), 'that poor old mother of his', etc. When we now say, 'he has a house of his own', no one could think of this as meaning 'he has one of his own houses'.

195. In the *nominative plural* the Old English declensions present the same motley spectacle as the genitive singular. Most masculines have the ending *as*, but some have *e* (*Engle*, etc.), some *a* (*sunan*, etc.) and a great many *an* (*guman*, etc.); some nouns have no ending at all, and most of these change the vowel of the kernel (*fet*, etc.), while a few have the plural exactly like the singular (*hettend*). Feminine words formed their plural in *a* (*giefa*), in *e* (*bene*), in *an* (*tungan*) or without any ending (*sweostor*; with mutation *bec*). Neuters had either no ending (*word*) or else *u* (*hofu*) or *an* (*eagan*). From the oldest period the ending *as* (later *es*, *s*) has been continually gaining ground, first among those masculines that belonged to other declensional classes, later on also in the other genders. The *an*-ending, which was common to a very great number of substantives from the very beginning, also showed great powers of expansion and at one time seemed as likely as (*e*)*s* to become the universal plural ending. But finally (*e*)*s* carried the day, probably because it was the most distinctive ending, and possibly under Scandinavian influence (§ 79). In

the beginning of the modern period *eyen*, *shoon*, and *hosen*, *housen*, *peasen* still existed, but they were doomed to destruction, and now *oxen* is the only real plural in *n* surviving, for *children* as well as the biblical *kine* and *brethren* are too irregular to count as plurals made by the addition of *n*. The mutation plural has survived in some words whose signification causes the plural to occur more frequently than, or at least as frequently as, the singular: *geese*, *teeth*, *feet*, *mice*, *lice*, *men* and *women*. In all other words the analogy of the plurals in *s* was too strong for the old form to be preserved.

196. Instead of the ending *-ses* we often find a single *s*; in some cases this may be the continued use of the French plural form without any ending (*cas* sg. and pl.), as in *sense* (their sense are shut, Sh.), *corpse* (pl. Sh.) etc. In *Coriolanus* III. 1. 118 *voyce* and *voyses* occur, both of them to be read as one syllable: 'Why shall the people give One that speakes thus, their voyce?—He give my reasons, More worthier than their voyces. They know the corne.' But when Shakespeare uses *princesse* and *balance* as plurals (Tp. I. 2. 173; Merch. IV. 1. 255), the forms admit of no other explanation than that of haplology (pronouncing the same sound once instead of twice). Thus also in the genitive case: 'his mistresse eye-brow' (As II. 7. 149), 'your Highness' pleasure', etc. Now it is more usual to give the full form *mistress's*, etc., yet in *Pears' soap* the juxtaposition of three *s*'es is avoided by means of the apostrophized form. The genitive of the plural is now always haplogized: 'the Poets' Corner', except in some dialects: 'other folks's children' (George Eliot), 'the bairns's clease' (Murray, Dial. of Scotl. 164). Wallis (1658) expressly states that the gen. pl. in *the Lords' House* (by him written *Lord's*) stands instead of *the Lords's House* (duo *s* in unum coincidunt). A phenomenon of the same order is the omission of the genitive sign before a word beginning with *s*, now chiefly before *sake*: for fashion sake, etc.

197. Sometimes an *s* belonging to the stem of the word is taken by the popular instinct to be a plural ending.<sup>1</sup> Thus in *alms*, (ME. *almesse*, *elmesse*, pl. *almesses*; OE. *ælmesse* from Gr. *eleemosune*); it is significant that the word is very often found in connexions where it is impossible from the context to discover whether a singular or a plural is intended (ask alms, give alms, etc.). In the Authorized Version the word occurs eleven times, but eight of these are ambiguous, two are clearly singular (asked an almes, gave much almes) and one is probably plural (Thy praiers and thine almes are come up). Nowadays the association between the *s* of the *alms* and the plural ending has become so firm that *an alms* is said and written very rarely indeed, though it is found in Tennyson's Enoch Arden. *Riches* is another case in point; Chaucer still lays the stress on the second syllable (*richesse* as in French) and uses the plural *richesses*; but as subsequently the final *e* disappeared, and as the word occurred very often in such a way that the context does not show its number ('Thou bearest thy heavie riches but a journie', Sh. Meas. III. 1. 27; thus in fourteen out of the 24 places where Shakespeare uses it), it is no wonder that the form was generally conceived as a plural, thus 'riches are a power' (Ruskin). The singular use (the riches of the ship is come on shore, Sh. Oth. II. 1. 88, too much riches, R 2 III. 4. 60) is now wholly obsolete.

198. A further step is taken in those words that lose the *s* originally belonging to their stem, because it is mistakenly apprehended as the sign of plural.<sup>2</sup> Latin *pisum* became in OE. *pise*, in ME. *pese*, pl. *pesen*; Butler (1633) still gives *peas* as sg. and *peasen* as pl., but he adds, 'the singular is most used for the plural: as . . . a peck of peas; though the Londoners seem to make it a regular plural, calling a *peas* a *pea*'. In compounds like *peaseblossom*, *peaseporridge* and

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mod. Engl. Grammar II ch. V.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the other back-formations mentioned above, § 183.

*pease-soup* (Swift, Lamb) the old form was preserved long after *pea* had become the recognized singular. Similarly a *cherry* was evolved from a form in *s* (French *cerise*), a *riddle* from *riddles*; *an eaves* (OE. *efes*, cf. Got. *ubizwa*, ON. *ups*) is often made *an eave*, and vulgarly a *pony shay* is said for *chaise*; compare also Bret Harte's 'heathen *Chinee*' and the parallel forms *a Portuguese*, *a Maltee*. An interesting case in point is *Yankee*, if H Logeman's ingenious explanation is to be accepted. The term was originally applied to the inhabitants of the Dutch colonies in North America (New Amsterdam, now New York, etc.). Now *Jan Kees* is a nickname still applied in Flanders to people from Holland proper. *Jan* of course is the common Dutch name corresponding to English John, and *Kees* may be either the usual pet-form of the name Cornelis, another Christian name typical of the Dutch, or else a dialectal variation of *kaas* 'cheese' in allusion to that typically Dutch product, or — what is most probable — a combination of both. *Jankees* in English became *Yankees*, where the *s* was taken as the plural ending and eventually disappeared, and *Yankee* became the designation of any inhabitant of New England and even sometimes of the whole of the United States.

199. We have a different class of back-formations in those cases in which the *s* that is subtracted is really the plural ending, while one part of the word is retained which is logically consistent with the plural idea only. It is easily conceivable that most people ignorant of the fact that the first syllable of *cinque-ports* means 'five', have no hesitation in speaking of Hastings as a *cinque-port*; but it is more difficult to see how the signification of the numeral in *ninepins* should be forgotten, and yet sometimes each of the 'pins' used in that play is called a *ninepin*, and Gosse writes 'the author sets up his four ninepins'.

200. In some words the *s* of the plural has become fixed, as if it belonged to the singular, thus in *means*. As is shown by the pun in Shakespeare's *Romeo* 'no

sudden meane of death, though nere so meane' the old form was still understood in his time, but the modern form too is used by him (*by that meanes*, Merch.; *a means*, Wint.). Similarly: *too much pains, an honourable amends, a shambles, an innings*, etc., sometimes *a scissors, a tweezers, a barracks, a golf links*, etc., where the logical idea of a single action or thing has proved stronger than the original grammar.

201. It is not, however, till a new plural has been formed on such a form that the transformation from plural to singular has been completed. This phenomenon, which might be termed plural raised to the second power, will naturally occur with greater facility when the original singular is not in use or when the manner of forming the plural is no longer perspicuous. Thus OE. *broc* formed its plural *brec* (cf. *gos ges* goose geese), but *broc* became obsolete, and *brec, breech* was free to become a singular and to form a new plural *breeches*. Similarly *invoices, quinces, bodices* and a few others have a double plural ending; but then the unusual sound of the first ending (voiceless *s*, where the ordinary ending is voiced, as in *joys, sins*) facilitated the forgetting of the original function of the *s* (written *-ce*). *Bodice* is really nothing but a by-form of *bodies*. The old pronunciation of *bellows* and *gallows* had also a voiceless *s*, which helps to explain the vulgar plurals *bellowses* and *gallowses*. But in the occasional plural *mewses* (from *a mew*, orig. *a muc*) the new ending has been added in spite of the first *s* being voiced. These plurals raised to the second power, to which must be added *sixpences, threepences*, etc., are particularly interesting because there really are cases where the want is felt of expressing the plural of something which is in itself plural, either formally or logically; cf. *many (pairs of) scissors*. Generally one plural ending only is used<sup>1</sup>, but occasionally the logically correct double ending is resorted to, especially among uneducated people;

<sup>1</sup> 'Then ensued one of the most lively ten minutes that I can remember' (Conan Doyle), plural of 'a lively ten minutes'.

Thackeray makes his flunkey write: 'there was 8 sets of chamberses' (Yellowplush Papers, p. 39), and a London schoolboy<sup>1</sup> once wrote: 'cats have clawses' (one cat has claws!) and again 'cats have 9 liveses' (each cat has nine lives!) Dr. Murray<sup>2</sup> mentions a double plural sometimes formed in Scotch dialect from such words as *schuin* (one person's shoes), *feit* 'feet' and *kye* 'cows', *schuins* meaning more than one pair of shoes, and he ingeniously suggests that this may illustrate such plurals as *children*, *brethren*, *kine*; the original plurals were *childer*, *brether*, *ky* (still preserved in the northern dialect), which may have 'come to be used collectively for the offspring or members of a single family, the herd of a single owner, so that a second plural inflection became necessary to express the *brethren* and *children* of many families, the *ky-en* of many owners . . . In modern English we restrict *brothers*, which replaces *brether*, to those of one family, using *brethren* for those who call each other *brother*, though of different families.'

202. Most of the words that make their plural like the singular are old neuters, the *s*-ending belonging originally to masculines only and having only gradually been extended to the other two genders; thus *swine*, *deer*, *sheep*. In some cases a difference sprang up between the singular in speaking of the mass and an individual plural (in *-s*), as seen most clearly in Shakespeare's 'Shce hath more *haire* then wit, and more faults then *hairs*' (Gent III. 1. 362) and Milton's 'which thou from Heaven Feigndst at thy birth was giv'n thee in thy *hair*, Where strength can least abide, though all thy *hairs* Were bristles' (Sams. Ag. 1186). This difference was transferred to some old masculines, like *fish*, *fowl*; and a great many names of particular fishes and birds, especially those generally hunted and used for food, are now often unchanged in the plural (*snipe*, *plover*, *trout*, *salmon*, etc.), though with a great deal

<sup>1</sup> *Very Original English* by Barker (London 1889), p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> *Dialect of the Southern Counties of Scotland* (London 1873) p. 161.



of vacillation. It is also noticeable that *much fruit* = *many fruits* and *much coal* = *many coals*. When we say 'four hundred men', but '*hundreds* of men', 'two dozen collars', but '*dozens* of collars' and similarly with *couple*, *pair*, *score* and some other words, we have an approach to the rule prevailing in many languages, e. g. Magyar, where the plural ending is not added after a numeral, because that suffices in itself to show that a plural is intended.<sup>1</sup>

203. (II). Disappearance of the old *word-gender*.<sup>2</sup> In Old English, as in all the old cognate languages, each substantive, no matter whether it referred to animate beings or things or abstract notions, belonged to one or other of the three gender-classes. Thus masculine pronouns and endings were found with names of a great many things which had nothing to do with male sex (e. g. *horn*, *ende* 'end', *ebba* 'ebb', *dæg*, 'day') and similarly feminine pronouns and endings with many words without any relation to female sex (e. g. *sorh* 'sorrow', *glof* 'glove', *plume* 'plum', *pipe*). Anyone acquainted with the intricacies of the same system (or want of system) in German will feel how much English has gained in clearness and simplicity by giving up these distinctions and applying *he* only to male, and *she* only to female, living beings. The distinction between animate and inanimate now is much more accentuated than it used to be, and this has led to some other changes, of which the two most important are the creation (about 1600) of the form *its* (before that time *his* was neuter as well as masculine) and the restriction of the relative pronoun *which* to things: its old use alike for persons and things is seen in 'Our father *which* art in Heaven'.

204. (III. *Numerals*). While the cardinal numerals show very little change during the whole life of the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Mod. Engl. Gr.* II ch. III Unchanged plurals, and ch. V Mass-words.

<sup>2</sup> On the relation between gender and sex see *Philosophy of Grammar* ch. XVII.

language, except what is a consequence of ordinary phonetic development<sup>1</sup>, the ordinals have been much more changed so that their formation is now completely regular, with the exception of the first three. *First* has ousted the old *forma* (corresponding to Latin *primus*), and the French *second* has been called in to relieve *other* of one of its significations, so that a useful distinction has been created between the definite and the indefinite numeral. As for the numbers from 4 upwards, the regularization has affected both the stem and the ending of the numeral. In Old English the *n* had disappeared from *seofoda*, *nigoda* and *teoda* (*seower-teoda*, etc.), but now it has been analogically reintroduced: *seventh*, *ninth*, *tenth* (*fourteenth*, etc.), the only survival of the older forms being *tithe*, which is now a substantive differentiated from the numeral, as seen particularly clearly in the phrase 'a tenth part of the tithe' (Auth. Version, Num. 18. 26). In *twelfth* and *fifth* we have the insignificant anomaly of *f* (which in the former is often mute) instead of *v*, and the consonant-group in the latter has shortened the vowel, but elsewhere there is complete correspondence between each cardinal and its ordinal. As for the ending, it used according to a well-known phonetic rule to be *-ta* (later *-te*, *-t*) after voiceless open consonants, thus *fifta*, *fift*, *sixta* *sixt*, *twelfta* *twelft*; and these are still the only forms in Shakespeare (Henry the Fifth, etc.)<sup>2</sup> and Milton. The regular forms in *th* evidently were used in writing before they became prevalent in speaking, for Schade in 1765 laid down the rule that *th* was to be pronounced *t* in *twelfth* and *fifth*. *Eighth*, which would

<sup>1</sup> Note that in Old and Middle English the cardinals had an *-e* when used absolutely (*fif* men, they were *five*), and that it is this form that has prevailed. If the old conjoint form had survived, *five* and *twelve* would have ended in *f*, and *seven*, *nine*, and *eleven* would have had no *-n*.

<sup>2</sup> *Twelfth Night* is in the folio of 1623 called *Twelve Night* and similarly we have *twelve day*, where the middle consonant of a difficult group has been discarded, just as in *the thousand part* (As IV. I. 46)

be more adequately written *eightth*, is also a modern form; the old editions of Shakespeare have *eight*. The formation in *-th*, which is now beautifully regular, has also been extended in recent times to a few substantives: *the hundredth, thousandth, millionth, and dozenth*.

205. (IV). The *pronominal system* has been reinforced by some new applications of old material. *Who* and *which*, originally interrogative and indefinite pronouns, are now used also as relatives. *Self* has entered into the compounds *myself, himself*, etc., and has developed a plural, *ourselves, themselves*, which was new in the beginning of the sixteenth century. With regard to the use of these *self*-forms it may be remarked that their frequency first increased and then in certain cases decreased again: *he dressed him* became *he dressed himself*, and this is now giving way to *he dressed*. *One* has come to serve several purposes; as an indefinite pronoun (in 'one never can tell') it dates from the fifteenth century, and as a prop-word ('a little one', 'the little ones') the modern usage goes no further back than to the sixteenth century.

206. (V). The history of the forms in *ing* is certainly one of the most interesting examples of the growth from a very small beginning of something very important in the economy of the language. The 'ing', as I shall for shortness call the form with that ending, began as a pure substantive<sup>1</sup>, restricted as to the number of words from which it might be formed and restricted as to its syntactical functions. It seems to have been originally possible to form it only from nouns, cf. modern words like *schooling, shirting, stabling*; as some of the nouns from which ings were derived, had corresponding weak verbs, the ings came to be looked upon as derived from these verbs, and new ings were made from other weak verbs. (Also from French verbs, cf. above § 106). But it was a long

<sup>1</sup> The Old English ending was *ung* as well as *ing*.

time before *ings* were made from strong verbs; a few occur in the very last decades of the Old English period, but most of them did not creep into existence till the twelfth or thirteenth century or even later, and it is not, perhaps, till the beginning of the fifteenth century that the formation had taken such a firm root in the language that an *ing* could be formed unhesitatingly from any verb whatever (apart from the auxiliaries *can, may, shall, must*, etc., which have no *ings*).

207. With regard to its syntactical use the old *ing* was a substantive and was restricted to the functions it shared with all other substantives. While keeping all its substantival qualities, it has since gradually acquired most of the functions belonging to a verb. It was, and is, inflected like a substantive; now the genitive case is rare and scarcely occurs outside of such phrases as 'reading for reading's sake'; but the plural is common: his comings and goings; feelings, drawings, leavings, weddings, etc. Like any other substantive it can have the definite or indefinite article and an adjective before it: a beginning, the beginning, a good beginning, etc., so also a genitive: Tom's savings. It can enter into a compound noun either as the first or as the second part: a walking-stick; sight-seeing. The *ing* can be used in a sentence in every position occupied by an ordinary substantive. It is the subject and the predicative nominative in 'complimenting is lying', the object in 'I hate lying'; it is governed by an adjective in 'worth knowing', and governed by a preposition in 'before answering', etc. But we shall now see how several of the peculiar functions of verbs are extended to the *ing*. The coalescence in form of the verbal substantive and of the present participle is, of course, one of the chief factors of this development.

208. When the *ing* was a pure substantive the *object* of the action it indicated could be expressed in one of three ways: it might be put in the genitive case ('sio feding para sceapa', the feeding of the sheep,

Alfred), or it might form the first part of a compound (blood-letting) or — the usual construction in Middle English — it might be added after *of* (in magnifying of his name, Chaucer). The first of these constructions has died out; the last is in our days especially frequent after the article (since the telling of those little fibs, Thackeray). But from the fourteenth century we find a growing tendency to treat the *ing* like a form of the verb and, accordingly, to put the object in the accusative case. Chaucer's words 'in getinge of your riches and in usinge hem' (B 2813) show both constructions in juxtaposition; so also 'Thou art so fat-witted with drinking of olde sacke, and unbuttoning thee after supper' (Henry IV, A. I. 2. 2). Chaucer's 'In liftinge up his hevy dronken cors' (H 67) shows a double deviation from the old substantival construction, for an ordinary substantive cannot in this way be *followed by an adverb*, and in the old language the adverb was joined to the *ing* in a different way (up-lifting, in-coming, down-going). In course of time it became more and more usual to join any kind of adverb to the *ing*, e. g. 'a man shal not wyth *ones* [once] over redyng fynde the ryght understandyng' (Caxton), 'he proposed our *immediately* drinking a bottle together' (Fielding), 'nothing distinguishes great men from inferior men more than their *always*, whether in life or in art, knowing the ways things are going' (Ruskin).

209. A substantive does not admit of any indication of *time*; *his movement* may correspond in meaning to 'he moves (is moving)', 'he moved (was moving)', or 'he will move'. Similarly the *ing* had originally, and to a great extent still has, no reference to time: 'on account of his coming' may be equal to 'because he comes' or 'because he came' or 'he will come', according to the connexion in which it occurs. 'I intend seeing the king' refers to the future, 'I remember seeing the king' to the past, or rather the *ing* as such implies neither of these tenses. But since the end of the sixteenth century the *ing* has still further approxi-

mated to the character of a verb by developing a composite perfect. Shakespeare, who uses the new tense in a few places, e. g. *Gent. I. 3. 16* ('To let him spend his time no more at home; Which would be great impeachment to his age, In *having knowne* no travaile in his youth') does not always use it where it would be used now; for in 'Give order to my servants that they take No note at all of our *being* absent hence' *being* corresponds in meaning to *having been*, as shown by the context (*Merch. of Ven. V. 120*). — Like other nouns the *ing* was also at first incapable of expressing the verbal distinction between *the active and the passive voice*. The simple *ing* is still often neutral in this respect, and in some connexions assumes a passive meaning, as in 'it wants mending', 'the story lost much in the telling'. This is extremely frequent in old authors, e. g. 'Use everie man after his desart, and who should scape whipping' (*Hamlet II. 2. 554*), 'Shall we . . . excuse his throwing into the water?' (*Wiv. III. 3. 206* = his being, or having been, thrown), 'An instrument of this your calling backe' (*Oth. IV. 2. 45*). But about 1600 a new form came into existence, as the old one would often appear ambiguous, and it was felt convenient to be able to distinguish between 'foxes enjoy hunting' and 'foxes enjoy being hunted'. The new passive is rare in Shakespeare ('I spoke . . . of being taken by the insolent foe', *Oth. I. 3. 186*), but has now for a long time been firmly established in the language.

210. Still another step must be mentioned in this long development of a form at first purely substantival into one partly substantival and partly verbal in function. The *subject* of the *ing*, like that of any verbal noun (for instance *Cæsar's* conquests, *Pope's* imitations of Horace), is for the most part put in the genitive case — nearly always when it is a personal pronoun (in spite of *his* saying so), and generally when it indicates a person (in spite of *John's* saying so). But a variety of circumstances led to the use in many instances

of the common case before the *ing*.<sup>1</sup> Here I must content myself with quoting a few instances of the new construction: 'When we talk of this man or that woman being no longer the same person' (Thackeray), 'besides the fact of those three being there, the drawbridge is kept up' (A. Hope), 'When I think of this being the last time of seeing you' (Miss Austen), 'the possibility of such an effect being wrought by such a cause' (Dickens), 'he insisted upon the Chamber carrying out his policy' (Lecky), 'I have not the least objection in life to a rogue being hung' (Thackeray; here evidently no participle), 'no man ever heard of opium leading into delirium tremens' (De Quincey), 'the suffering arises simply from people not understanding this truism' (Ruskin). These examples will show that the construction is especially useful in those cases where for some reason or other it is impossible to use the genitive case, but that it is also found where no such reason could be adduced. — Let me sum up by saying that when an Englishman now says, 'There is some probability of the place having never been inspected by the police', he deviates in four points from the constructions of the *ing* that would have been possible to one of his ancestors six hundred years ago: *place* is in the crude form, not in the genitive; the adverb; the perfect; and the passive. Thanks to these extensions the *ing* has clearly become a most valuable means of expressing tersely and neatly relations that must else have been indicated by clumsy dependent clauses.

211. (VI). We proceed to the *verbal ending -s* (*he loves*, etc.). In Old English *-th* (þ) was used in the ending of the third person singular and in all persons in the plural of the present indicative, but the vowel before it varied, so that we have for instance: —

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<sup>1</sup> See *Society for Pure English*, Tract XXV (1926), p. 147 ff. (against H. W. Fowler's view of 'Fused Participles'). Van der Gaaf, in *Engl. Studies* X (1928) is probably wrong in attributing the construction to imitation of Old French.

<i>infinitive</i>	<i>3rd sg.</i>	<i>pl.</i>
sprecan	spricþ	sprecaþ
bindan	bindeþ, bint	bindaþ
nerian	nereþ	neriaþ
lufian	lufaþ	lufiaþ.

But in the Northumbrian dialect of the tenth century *s* was substituted for þ (singular *bindes*, plural *bindas*), and as all unstressed vowels were soon after levelled, the two forms became identical (*bindes*). As in the same dialect the second person singular too ended in *s* (as against the *-st* of the South), all persons sounded alike except the first singular. But the development was not to stop there. In Old English a difference is made in the plural, according as the verb precedes *we* or *ge* ('ye') or not (*binde we*, *binde ge*, but *we bindaþ*, *ge bindaþ*). This is the germ of the more radical difference now carried through consistently in the Scotch dialect, where the *s* is only added when the verb is not accompanied by its proper pronoun, — but in that case it is used in all persons. Murray gives the following sentences among others<sup>1</sup>:

aa *cum* fyrst — yt's mey at *cums* fyrst.  
 wey *gang* theare — huz tweae quheyles *gangs* theare.  
 they *cum* an' *teake* them — the burds *cums* an' *pæcks* them. (I come first; it is I that come first; we go there; we two sometimes go there; they come and take them; the birds come and pick them.)

In the other parts of the country the development was different. In the Midland dialect the *-en* of the subjunctive and of the preterit was transferred to the present of the indicative, so that we have the following forms in the standard language: —

<i>14th century</i>	<i>16th century</i>
I falle	I fall
he falleth	he fall(e)th
we fallen (falle)	we fall.

<sup>1</sup> *Dial. of the Southern Counties of Scotland*, 1873, p. 212, where quotations from the earlier literature are also given.



This is the only dialect in which the third person singular is kept clearly distinct from the other persons.

In the South of England, finally, the *th* was preserved in the plural, and was even extended to the first person singular. Old people in the hilly parts of Somersetshire and Devonshire still say not only [i wɔ:kþ] 'he walks', but also [ðei zeþ, ai zeþ] 'they say, I say'. In most cases, however, *do* is used, which is made [də] without any *th* through the whole singular as well as plural.<sup>1</sup>

212. But the northern *s*'es wandered southward. Three solitary examples are found in Chaucer for the sake of the rime.<sup>2</sup> A century later Caxton used the *th*-ending (eth, ith, yth) exclusively, and this remained the usual form in writing till the 16th century, when *s* began to be used in poetry. In Marlowe *s* is by far the commoner ending, except after hissing consonants (passeth, opposeth, pitcheth, presageth, etc., Tamburlaine 68, 845, 1415, 1622). Spenser prefers *s* in poetry. In the first four cantos of the *Faerie Queene* I have counted 94 *s*'es as against 24 *th*'s (besides 8 *has*, 18 *hath*, 15 *does*, and 31 *doth*.) But in his prose *th* predominates even much more than *s* does in his poetry. In the introductory letter to Sir W. Raleigh there is only one *s* (it needs), but many *th*'s; and in his book on 'the Present State of Ireland' all the third persons singular end in *th*, except a small number of phrases (*me seems*, several times, but *it seemeth*; *what boots it*; *how comes it*, and perhaps a few more) that seem to be characteristic of a more colloquial tone than the rest of the book. Shakespeare's practice is not easy to ascertain. In a great many passages the folio of 1623 has *th* where the earlier quartos have *s*. In the prose

<sup>1</sup> Elworthy, *Grammar of the Dialect of West Somerset* p. 191ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Telles· elles* Duch. 73, *Fame* 426; *failes: halles* Duch. 257. In the *Reves Tale* the *s*-forms are used to characterize the North of England dialect of the two students (*gas* for Chaucer's ordinary *gooth*, etc.).

parts of his dramas *s* prevails<sup>1</sup>, and the rule may be laid down that *th* belongs more to the solemn or dignified speeches than to everyday talk, although this is by no means carried through everywhere. In *Macbeth* I. 7. 29 ff. Lady Macbeth is more matter-of-fact than her husband (Lady: He *has* almost supt . . . Macb.: *Hath* he ask'd for me? Lady: Know you not he *ha's*. Macb. . . . He *hath* honour'd me of late . . .), but when his more solemn mood seizes her, she too puts on the buskin (Was the hope drunke, Wherein you drest your selfe? *Hath* it slept since?). — Where Mercutio mocks Romeo's love-sickness (II. 1. 15), he has the line: He *heareth* not, he *stirreth* not, he *moveth* not, but in his famous description of Queen Mab (I. 4. 58 ff.) he has 18 verbs in *s* and only two in *th*, *hath* and *driveth*, of which the latter is used for the sake of the metre.

213. Contemporary prose, at any rate in its higher forms, has generally *th*; the *s*-ending is not at all found in the Authorized Version of 1611, nor in Bacon's *Atlantis* (though in his *Essays* there are some *s*'es). The conclusion with regard to Elizabethan usage as a whole seems to be that the form in *s* was a colloquialism and as such was allowed in poetry and especially in the drama. This *s* must, however, be considered a licence wherever it occurs in the higher literature of that period. But in the first half of the seventeenth century *s* must have been the ending universally used in ordinary conversation, and we have evidence that it was even usual to read *s* where the book had *th*, for Richard Hodges (1648) gives in his list of words pronounced alike though spelt differently among others *boughs boweth bowze; clause claweth claws; courses courseth corpses; choose cheweth*<sup>2</sup>, and in

<sup>1</sup> Franz, *Shakespeare-Grammatik*, 3rd ed p. 151: In *Much Ado* (Q 1600) *th* is not found at all in the prose parts and only twice in the poetical parts; the *Merry Wives*, which is chiefly in prose, has only one *th*.

<sup>2</sup> See Ellis, *Early English Pronunciation*, IV, 1018.

1649 he says 'howsoever wee write them thus, leadeth it, maketh it, noteth it, we say lead's it, make's it, note's it'. The only exceptions seem to have been *hath* and *doth*, where the frequency of occurrence protected the old forms from being modified analogically<sup>1</sup>, so that they were prevalent till about the middle of the eighteenth century. Milton, with the exceptions just mentioned, always writes *s* in his prose as well as in his poetry, and so does Pope. No difference was then felt to be necessary between even the most elevated poetry and ordinary conversation in that respect. But it is well worth noting that Swift, in the Introduction to his 'Polite Conversation', where he affects a quasi-scientific tone, writes *hath* and *doth*, while in the conversations themselves *has* and *does* are the forms constantly used.<sup>2</sup>

214. At church, however, people went on hearing the *th*-forms, although even there the *s*'es began to creep in.<sup>3</sup> And it must certainly be ascribed to influence from biblical language that the *th*-forms again began to be used by poets towards the end of the eighteenth century; at first apparently this was done rather sparingly, but nineteenth century poets employ *th* to a greater extent. This revival of the old form affords the advantage from the poet's point of view of adding at discretion a syllable, as in Wordsworth's

In gratitude to God, Who feeds our hearts  
For His own service; *knoweth*, *loveth* us (Prelude 13. 276)

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<sup>1</sup> This applies, partially at least, to *sath* as well.

<sup>2</sup> In the *Journal to Stella* all verbs have *s*, except *hath*, which is, however, less frequent than *has*. Further details on *th* and *s* in E. Holmqvist, *History of the Engl. Pres. Inflections* (Heidelberg 1922) and H. C. Wyld, *A History of Mod. Colloquial English* (2nd ed., London 1936), p. 332ff. Wyld may be right in thinking that the extremely common auxiliary *is* contributed to the popularity of the *s*-ending.

<sup>3</sup> See the *Spectator*, no. 147 (Morley's ed. p. 217) 'a set of readers [of prayers at church] who affect, forsooth, a certain gentleman-like familiarity of tone, and mend the language as they go on, crying instead of *pardoneth* and *absolveth*, *pardons* and *absolves*'.

or in Byron's

Whate'er she *loveth*, so she *loves* thee not,  
What can it profit thee? (Heaven and Earth I sc. 2).

Sometimes the *th*-form comes more handy for the rime (as when *sauth* rimes with *death*), and sometimes the following sound may have induced a poet to prefer one or the other ending, as in

. . . Coleridge *hath* the sway,  
And Wordsworth *has* supporters, two or three,<sup>1</sup>

but in a great many cases individual fancy only decides which form is chosen. In prose, too, the *th*-form begins to make its re-appearance in the nineteenth century, not only in biblical quotations, etc., but often with the sole view of imparting a more solemn tone to the style, as in Thackeray's 'Not always *doth* the writer know whither the divine Muse *leadeth* him'.

215. The nineteenth century has even gone so far as to create a double-form in one verb, making a distinction between *doth* [pronounced dʌp] as an auxiliary verb and *doeth* [pronounced du:ip] as an independent one. The early printers used the two forms indiscriminately, or rather preferred *doth* where *doeth* would make the line appear too closely packed, and *doeth* where there was room enough. Thus in the Authorized Version of 1611 we find 'a henne *doeth* gather her brood under her wings' (Luke XIII. 34) and 'he that *doth* the will of my father' (Matth. VII. 21), where recent use would have reversed the order of the forms, but in 'whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and *doeth* them' (Matth. VII. 24) the old printer happens to be in accordance with the rule of our own days. When the *th*-form was really living, *doeth* was certainly always pronounced in one syllable (thus in Shakespeare). I give a few examples of the modern differentiation.<sup>2</sup> J. R. Lowell

<sup>1</sup> *Don Juan* XI. 69.

<sup>2</sup> Which has not been noticed in N.E.D., though it mentions the corresponding difference between *doet* and *doest* as 'in late use'.

writes (My Love, Poems 1849, I 129 = Poetical Works in one volume p. 6) 'She *doeth* little kindnesses . . . Her life *doth* rightly harmonize . . . And yet *doth* ever flow aright.' Rider Haggard has both forms in the same sentence (She 199) 'Man *doeth* this and *doeth* that, but he knows not to what ends his sense *doth* prompt him'; cf. also Tennyson's *The Captain*: 'He that only rules by terror, *Doeth* grievous wrong.'

216. To sum up. If the *s* of the third person singular comes from the North, this is true of the outer form only; the 'inner form', to use the expression of some philologists, is the Midland one, that is to say, *s* is used in those cases only where the Midland dialects had *th*, and is not extended according to the northern rules. In vulgar English *s* is used in the first person singular: *I wishes*; *says I*, etc., as in Rehearsal (1671): 'I makes 'em both speak fresh' (Arber's reprint, p. 53). But it will be seen that this is in direct opposition to the northern usage where the *s* is never found by the side of the personal pronoun.

217. (VII). A notable feature of the history of the English language is the building up of a rich system of *tenses*<sup>1</sup> on the basis of the few possessed by Old English, where the present was also a sort of vague future, and where the simple preterit was often employed as a kind of pluperfect, especially when supported by *ær*, 'ere, before'. The use of *have* and *had* as an auxiliary for the perfect and pluperfect began in the Old English period, but it was then chiefly found with transitive verbs, and the real perfect-signification had scarcely yet been completely evolved from the original meaning of the connexion: *ic hæbbe þone fisc gefangenne* meant at first 'I *have* the fish (as) caught' (note the accusative ending in the participle). By and by a distinction was made between 'I had mended the table' and 'I had the table mended', 'he had left

<sup>1</sup> See my *Modern Engl Gr.*, vol. IV, especially chs. 12—14 (Expanded tenses) and 15—21 (will, shall, would, should), *Philosophy of Grammar*, chs. 19 and 20, *Essentials of Engl. Gr.*, chs. 23—25.

nothing' and 'he had nothing left'. In Middle English *have* came to be used extensively in the perfect of intransitive verbs as well as transitive; *I have been* does not seem to occur earlier than 1200. With such verbs as *go* and *come*, *I am* was usual in the perfect for several centuries, where now *I have gone* and *I have come* (*returned*, etc.) are the ordinary expressions. The verbs *will* and *shall* have in many contexts come to be auxiliaries serving to express pure futurity, the original meaning of volition and obligation being more or less effaced; but owing partly to the fact that to express the three distinct ideas of obligation, volition, and simple futurity we have only those two verbs as against German *sollen*, *wollen* und *werden*, the actual rules for the employment of the two verbs are somewhat complicated, and where strict grammarians require *shall* (I shall, shall you; he thinks that he shall die, he = shifted first person), the verb *will* (and the shortened form 'll) is now more and more used, even in the South of England. In Scotland, Ireland, and North America, *will* has long been almost exclusively used as auxiliary. The present rules may be stated roughly thus: To indicate pure, colourless future *will* is used everywhere, except in those cases in which it might be misunderstood as implying actual will. Often the unambiguous *is going to* is used, and in many cases the simple present suffices: *I start to-morrow if it is fine*. To express obligation or necessity we have the unambiguous expressions *must*, *has to*, and to express volition *want*, *intend*, *mean*, *choose* are often preferred where *will* was formerly used. — The expanded tenses *I am reading*, *I was reading*, *I have been reading*, *I shall be reading*, were not fully developed even in Shakespeare's time; the distinction between the simple and the expanded tenses is now a wonderful means of expressing temporal and emotional nuances.<sup>1</sup> The passive construction (*the house is being built*) is an

<sup>1</sup> The latest and best treatment of the expanded forms is F. Mossé, *Histoire de la Forme Périphrastique être + participe présent* II (Paris 1936).

innovation dating from the very end of the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Before that time the phrase was *the house is building*, i. e. *a-building* 'is in construction', and the new phrase had to fight its way against much violent opposition in the nineteenth century before it was universally recognized as good English. Macaulay used it inadvertently a few times in letters in his youth, but avoided it in his books. A still more recent innovation is the use of *is being* before an adjective: After all, he was being sensible (Wells), i. e. was at that particular moment sensible. — While the number of tenses has increased, the number of moods has tended to diminish, the subjunctive having now very little vital power left. Most of its forms have become indistinguishable from those of the indicative, but the loss is not a serious one, for the thought is just as clearly expressed in 'if he died', where *died* may be either indicative or subjunctive, as in 'if he were dead,' where the verb has a distinctively subjunctive form.

218. It will be seen that the development of new tenses sketched in the preceding section greatly increased the number of sentences formed after the same pattern that we had already in the case of some small verbs, chief of which were *can*, *may*, *must*. First we have a small, in itself insignificant verb and afterwards the really important verb either in the infinitive (*can see*, *will see*; *could see*, etc.) or in some participle (*is seeing*, *has seen*; *was seeing*, *had seen*). The number of sentences belonging to this type was enormously increased by the gradual development of the periphrastic *do*.<sup>2</sup> This verb was in OE. and early ME. used as a pro-verb to avoid the repetition of a verb just used, and as a causative, e. g. 'to do me live or deye' (Chaucer). In the latter sense it disappeared and was replaced by *make*. In ME.

<sup>1</sup> The alleged earlier examples are shown by Mossé, p 149, to be wrong.

<sup>2</sup> The latest and fullest treatment is V. Engblom, *On the Origin and Early Development of the Auxiliary do* (Lund 1938), with bibliography and criticism of other writers

it came to be used more and more as an auxiliary and may as such be placed by the side of the other lesser verbs, as in 'Though this good man can not see it: other men can see it, and haue sene it, and daily do see it' (Sir T. More). At first it was used indiscriminately without any definite grammatical purpose. In some poets such as Lydgate, in the beginning of the fifteenth century, it served chiefly to fill up the line and to make it possible to place the infinitive at the end as a convenient rime-word. Sometimes it serves to make the tense clear in those verbs that are alike in the present and preterit: we do set, did set. Cf. also 'the holy spyryte dyd and dothe remayne and shall remayne' (J. Fisher, ab. 1585). The culmination was reached in the 16th century, when it might almost seem as if all full verbs were "stripped of all those elements which to most grammarians constitute the very essence of a verb, namely, the marks of person, number, tense, and mood" (Progress in Lang. 124), leaving them to lesser verbs placed before them.

219. But then a reaction set in and gradually restricted the use of *do* to those cases that are well known from grammars of Present English, and in which it serves a definite grammatical purpose. It is used (1) for the sake of emphasis, especially in contrast: 'Shelley, when he did laugh, laughed heartily'; thus in earnest requests: 'Do tell me', even with *be*: 'Do be quiet!' (2) in negative sentences with *not*. Here it ends a long development. The earliest negative adverb is *ne*, placed before the verb, OE. *ic ne secge*. But frequently this was strengthened by the addition of *noht* (from *nawiht*, *nowiht*, meaning 'nothing') after the verb; *noht* became *not*; and the typical ME. form thus was *I ne seye not*. Here *ne* was pronounced with so little stress that it was apt to be dropped altogether, and the fifteenth century form was *I say not*. This survived for some centuries in *I know not* and a few other now obsolete combinations, as well as with all the formerly mentioned lesser verbs. By means of *do* that word-order is obtained which in most



languages is thought the most felicitous, *not* being placed before the really significant verb: *I do not say*, just as *I cannot say*, etc. In this position, however, *not* tends to be weakened, and so we get the colloquial forms *I don't say*, *can't say*, etc. (8) In such questions as are not introduced by a pronominal subject, which naturally has to stand first, the use of *do* as well as of the other lesser verbs effects a compromise between the ordinary interrogative word-order (verb before the subject) and the universal tendency to have the subject before the verb (that is, the verb that really means something): *Did he come?* just as *Must he come?*

220. Now the curious thing is that a similar construction of sentences is often made possible by means of the verbal substantives mentioned in 171. These are placed after verbs of small intrinsic meaning, to which are attached the marks of person and tense, of negation and question, in such familiar phrases as have a look (peep) at, have a wash, a shave, a try, have a care, take care, take a drive, a walk, a rest; give a glance, look, kick, push, hint; make (pay) a call, make a plunge, make use of, he made his bow to the hostess, etc.

221 (VIII). There are some important innovations in the syntax of the *infinitive*. In such a sentence as 'it is good for a man not to touch a woman', the noun with *for* was originally in the closest connexion with the adjective: 'What is good for a man?' 'Not to touch a woman.' But by a natural shifting this came to be apprehended as 'it is good | for a man not to touch a woman', so that *for a man* was felt to be the subject of the infinitive, and this manner of indicating the subject gradually came to be employed where the original construction is excluded. Thus in the beginning of a sentence: 'For us to levy power Proportionate to th'enemy, is all impossible' (Shakespeare), and after *than*: 'I don't know, what is worse than for such wicked strumpets to lay their sins at honest men's doors' (Fielding); further 'What I like best, is for a nobleman to marry a miller's daughter. And what

I like next best, is for a poor fellow to run away with a rich girl' (Thackeray), 'it is of great use to healthy women for them to cycle'.<sup>1</sup> Another recent innovation is the use of *to* as what might be called a pro-infinitive instead of the clumsy *to do so*: 'Will you play?' 'Yes, I intend to.' 'I am going to.' This is one among several indications that the linguistic instinct now takes *to* to belong to the preceding verb rather than to the infinitive, a fact which, together with other circumstances, serves to explain the phenomenon usually misnamed 'the split infinitive'. This name is bad because we have many infinitives without *to*, as 'I made him go'. *To* therefore is no more an essential part of an infinitive than the definite article is an essential part of a nominative, and no one would think of calling 'the good man' a split nominative. Although examples of an adverb between *to* and the infinitive occur as early as the fourteenth century, they do not become very frequent till the latter half of the nineteenth century. In some cases they decidedly contribute to the clearness of the sentence by showing at once what word is qualified by the adverb. Thackeray's and Seeley's sentences 'she only wanted a pipe in her mouth *considerably* to resemble the late Field Marshal' and 'the poverty of the nation did not allow them *successfully* to compete with the other nations' are not very happily built up, for the reader at the first glance is inclined to connect the adverb with what precedes. The sentences would have been clearer if the authors had ventured to place *to* before the adverb, as Burns does in 'Who dar'd to nobly stem tyrannic pride', and Carlyle in 'new Emissaries are trained, with new tactics, to, if possible, entrap him, and hoodwink and handcuff him'.

222. This rapid sketch of a certain number of grammatical changes, though necessarily giving only a fraction of the material on which it is based, has yet, I hope,

<sup>1</sup> See my article in *Festschrift Viëtor* (Marburg 1910), p. 85ff. and *Philos. of Grammar* 118, where a Slavic parallel is mentioned.

been sufficiently full to show that such changes are continually going on and that it would be a gross error to suppose that any deviation from the established rules of grammar is necessarily a corruption. Those teachers who know least of the age, origin, and development of the rules they follow, are generally the most apt to think that whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil, while he who has patiently studied the history of the past and trained himself to hear the linguistic grass grow in the present age will generally be more inclined to see in the processes of human speech a wise natural selection, through which while nearly all innovations of questionable value disappear pretty soon, the fittest survive and make human speech ever more varied and flexible and yet ever more easy and convenient to the speakers. There is no reason to suppose that this development has come to a stop with the beginning of the twentieth century: let us hope that in the future the more and more almighty schoolmaster may not nip too many beneficial changes in the bud.

middle ages of using a 'long i' (that is, j or I), whenever the letter was isolated or formed the last letter of a group; the numeral 'one' was written j or I (and three, ij, etc.) just as much as the pronoun. Thus no sociological inference can be drawn from this peculiarity.

248. On the other hand, the habit of addressing a single person by means of a plural pronoun was decidedly in its origin an outcome of an aristocratic tendency towards class-distinction. The habit originated with the Roman Emperors, who desired to be addressed as beings worth more than a single ordinary man; and French courtesy in the middle ages propagated it throughout Europe. In England as elsewhere this plural pronoun (*you, ye*) was long confined to respectful address. Superior persons or strangers were addressed as *you*; *thou* thus becoming the mark either of the inferiority of the person spoken to, or of familiarity or even intimacy or affection between the two interlocutors. English is the only language that has got rid of this useless distinction. The Quakers (the Society of Friends) objected to the habit as obscuring the equality of all human beings; they therefore *thou'd* (or rather *thee'd*) everybody. But the same democratic levelling that they wanted to effect in this way, was achieved a century and a half later in society at large, though in a roundabout manner, when the pronoun *you* was gradually extended to lower classes and thus lost more and more of its previous character of deference. *Thou* then for some time was reserved for religious and literary use as well as for foul abuse, until finally the latter use was discontinued also and *you* became the only form used in ordinary conversation.

249. Apart from the not very significant survival of *thou*, English has thus attained the only manner of address worthy of a nation that respects the elementary rights of each individual. People who express regret at not having a pronoun of endearment and who insist how pretty it is in other languages when, for instance,

two lovers pass from *vous* to the more familiar *tu*, should consider that no foreign language has really a pronoun exclusively for the most intimate relations. Where the two forms of address do survive, *thou* is very often, most often perhaps, used without real affection, nay very frequently in contempt or frank abuse. Besides, it is often painful to have to choose between the two forms, as people may be offended, sometimes by the too familiar, and sometimes by the too distant mode. Some of the unpleasant feeling of Helmer towards Krogstad in Ibsen's *Dukkehjem* ('A Doll's House' or 'Nora') must be lost to an English audience because occasioned by the latter using an old schoolfellow's privilege of *thou-ing* Helmer. In some languages the pronoun of respect often is a cause of ambiguity, in German and Danish by the identity in form of *Sie (De)* with the plural of the third person, in Italian and Portuguese by the identity with the singular (feminine) of the third person. When all the artificialities of the modes of address in different nations are taken into account — the *Lei, Ella, voi* and *tu* of the Italians, the *vossa mercê* ('your grace', to shopkeepers) and *você* (shortened form of the same, to people of a lower grade) of the Portuguese (who in addressing equals or superiors use the third person singular of the verb without any pronoun or noun), the *gij, jij, je* and *U* of the Dutch, not to mention the eternal use of titles as pronouns in German and, still more, in Swedish ('What does Mr. Doctor want?' 'The gracious Miss is probably aware', etc.) — the English may be justly proud of having avoided all such mannerisms and ridiculous extravagances, though the simple Old English way of using *thou* in addressing one person and *ye* in addressing more than one would have been still better.

250. Religion has had no small influence on the English language. The Bible has been studied and quoted in England more than in any other Christian country and a great many Biblical phrases have passed

into the ordinary language as household words. The style of the Authorized Version has been greatly admired by many of the best judges of English style, who — with some exaggeration — recommend an early familiarity with and a constant study of the English bible (and of that great imitator of Biblical simplicity and earnestness, John Bunyan) as the best training in the English language.<sup>1</sup> Tennyson found that parts of *The Book of the Revelation* were finer in English than in Greek, and he said that 'the Bible ought to be read, were it only for the sake of the grand English in which it is written, an education in itself.'<sup>2</sup> The rhythmical character of the Authorized Version is seen, for instance, in the well-known passage (Job III. 17) 'There the wicked cease from troubling: and there the wearie be at rest', which Tennyson was able to use as the last line of his 'May Queen' with scarcely any alteration: 'And the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest'.

251. C. Stoffel has collected quite a number of scriptural phrases and allusions used in Modern English<sup>3</sup>, such as 'Tell it not in Gath', 'the powers that be', 'olive branches' (children), 'strain at (or out) a gnat', 'to spoil the Egyptians', 'he may run that readeth

1 See the long series of quotations given in Albert S. Cook's little book 'The Bible and English Prose Style' (Boston, 1892). On the other hand, Fitzedward Hall says, 'To Dr. Newman, and to the myriads who think as he does about our English Bible, one would be allowed to whisper, that the poor 'Turks' of the Prayer Book talk exactly in their own fashion, and for reasons strictly analogous to theirs, about the purity of diction, and what not, of 'the Blessed Koran'. Ever since the Reformation, the ruling language of English religion has been, with rare exception, an affair either of studied antiquarianism or of nauseous pedantry. Simplicity, and little more, was aimed at, originally, and it sufficed for times of real earnestness. But the very quaintness of phrase which King James countersigned has attained to be canonized, till a *hath*, or a *thou*, delivered with conventional unction, now well nigh inspires a sensation of solemnity in its hearer, and a persuasion of the sanctanimity of its utterer'. (*Modern English* p. 16—17.)

2 *Life and Letters*, II. 41 and 71.

3 *Studies in English, Written and Spoken*, 1894, p. 125.

it', 'take up his parable', 'wash one's hands of' something, 'a still small voice', 'thy speech bewrayeth thee'. Some which Stoffel does not mention may find their place here. The modern word a *helpmate* is a corruption of the two words in Gen. II. 18: 'I will make him an *helpe meet* for him' (*meet* 'suitable'); the slang word a *rib* 'a wife' is from Genesis, too, and so is the expression 'the lesser lights'. 'A howling wilderness' is from Deuteron. XXXII. 10. 'My heart was still hot within me; then spake I with my tongue' (used, for instance, in Charlotte Brontë's 'The Professor', p. 161) is from Psalms XXXIX. 3, and 'many inventions' from Ecclesiastes VII. 29. From the New Testament may be mentioned 'to kill the fatted calf'<sup>1</sup>, 'whited sepulchres', 'of the earth, earthy', and 'to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth and height'. But people now begin to complain that scriptural allusions are to a great extent lost to the younger generation.

252. The scriptural 'holiness', which contains a Hebrew manner of expressing the superlative<sup>2</sup>, has given rise to a great many similar phrases in English, such as 'in my heart of hearts' (Shakesp. Hamlet, III. 2. 78; Wordsw. Prelude XIV. 281), 'the place of all places' (Miss Austen, Mansf. P. 71), 'I remember you a buck of bucks' (Thackeray, Newc. 100), 'every lad has a friend of friends, a crony of cronies, whom he cherishes in his heart of hearts' (ib. 148), 'the evil of evils in our present politics' (Lecky, Democr. and Lib. I. 21), 'the woman is a horror of horrors' (H. James, Two Magics 60), 'that mystery of mysteries, the beginning of things' (Sully, Study of Childh. 71), 'she is a modern of the moderns' (Mrs. H. Ward, Eleanor 265), 'love like yours is the pearl of pearls, and he who wins it is prince of princes' (Hall Caine, Christian 448), 'chemistry had been the study of studies for T. Sandys'

<sup>1</sup> While the phrase *prodigal son* is not found in the text of the Bible, it occurs in the heading of the chapter (Luke XV).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. 1 Timothy VI. 15 'the King of kings, and Lord of lords'.

(Barrie, Tommy and Grizel 6). Compare also 'I am sorrowful to my tail's tail' (Kipling, *Sec. Jungle B.* 160).

253. Some scriptural proper names have often been used as appellatives, such as *Jezebel* and *Rahab*; when a driver is called a *jehu* in slang, the allusion is to 2 Kings IX. 20, where Jehu's furious driving is mentioned. There is an American slang expression 'to give a person *jessie*' meaning, 'to beat him soundly', which is not explained in the Dictionaries (quotations may be found in Bartlett and in Farmer and Henley) Is it not in allusion to the *rod* mentioned in Isa. II. 1? ('There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse.') The NED. has the spelling *jesse* with the meaning 'a genealogical tree representing the genealogy of Christ . . . a decoration for a wall, window, vestment, etc., or in the form of a large branched candlestick'.

254. The influence of Puritans, though not strong enough to proscribe such words as *Christmas*, for which they wanted to substitute *Christtide* in order to avoid the Catholic *mass*, was yet strong enough to modify the custom of swearing. In Catholic times all sorts of fantastic oaths were fashionable:

Hir othes been so grete and so dampnable,  
That it is grisly for to here hem swere;  
Our blissed lordes body they to-tere;  
Hem thoughte Jewes rente him noght ynough.<sup>1</sup>

This practice was continued after the Reformation, and all sorts of alterations were made in the name of *God* in order to soften down the oaths: *gog*, *cocke*, *gosse*, *gosh*, *gom*, *Gough*, *Gad* etc. Similarly instead of (the) *Lord* people would say something like *Law*, *Lawks*, *Losh*, etc. Sometimes only the first sound was left out (Odd's lifelings, Shakesp. Tw. V. 187), more often only the genitive ending survived: 'Sblood (God's

<sup>1</sup> Chaucer C. T., C. 472 ff., also see Skeat's note to this passage, Chaucer's Works V p. 275.



blood), 'snails, 'slight, 'slid, 'zounds (God's wounds). The final sound of the nominative is kept in '*drot it* (God rot it), which was later made *drat it* (or with a playful corruption *rabbit it*). Many of these disguised oaths were extremely popular, and some survive to this day. *Goodness gracious me*, which defies all grammatical analysis, is one among numerous compromises between the inclination to swear and the fear of swearing; note also Rosalind's words: 'By my troth, and in good earnest, and so God mend mee, and by all pretty oathes that are not dangerous'. (As IV. 1. 192.)

255. The Puritans caused a law to be enacted in 1606 by which profane language was prohibited on the stage (3 James I. chap. 21), and consequently words like 'zounds were changed or omitted in Shakespearian plays, as we see from a comparison of the folio of 1623 and the earlier quartos; *Heaven* or *Jove* was substituted for *God*, and '*fore me* (*afore me*) or *trust me* for (*a*)*fore God*; 'God give thee the spirit of persuasion' (H 4 A I. 2. 170) was changed into 'Maist thou have the spirit of perswasion', etc. But in ordinary life people went on swearing, and from the comedies of the Restoration period a rich harvest may be reaped of all sorts of curious oaths. By little and little, however, the Puritan spirit conquered, and the English came to swear less than other European nations. Even the usual terms for oaths, — 'profane language' and 'expletives' — point to a greater purity in this respect. Instead of *My God*, an Englishwoman will often say *Dear me!* or *Oh my!* or *Good gracious!* Note also euphemisms like 'deuce' for devil and 'the other place' or 'a very uncomfortable place' for hell.<sup>1</sup> Among words that used to be tabooed in England one finds a great number which in other countries would be considered quite innocent, and the English have shown a really astonishing inventiveness in 'apologies' for strong words of every kind. *Damn* was considered extremely objectionable, and even such a mild substitute for it as *confound* was scarcely allowed in polite

<sup>1</sup> Compare also 'I will see you further'.

society.<sup>1</sup> In Bernard Shaw's *Candida* Morell is provoked into exclaiming 'Confound your impudence!'. whereupon his vulgar father-in-law retorts, 'Is that becomin language for a clorgyman?' and Morell replies, 'No, sir, it is not becoming language for a clergyman. I should have said damn your impudence: thats what St. Paul or any honest priest would have said to you'. Other substitutes for *damned* are *hanged*, *somethinged* (much rarer)<sup>2</sup> and a few that originate in the manner in which the objectionable word is — *not* printed: *dashed* (a — or 'dash' being put instead of it), *blanked* or *blanky* (from the same manner), *deed* (from the abbreviation d — d; sometimes the verb is printed to D). *Darned* is perhaps nothing but a purely phonetical development of *damned*, which is not without analogies, while *danged*, which occurs in Tennyson, is a curious blending of *damned* and *hanged*.<sup>3</sup> Thus we have here a whole family of words with an initial *d*, allowing the speaker to begin as if he were going to say the prohibited word, and then to turn off into more innocent channels.<sup>4</sup> The same is the case with the *bl*-words. *Blessed* by a process which is found in other similar cases<sup>5</sup> came to mean the opposite of the original meaning and became a synonym of cursed; *blamed* had the same signification.<sup>6</sup> Instead of these strong expressions people began to use other adjectives, shunting off after pronouncing *bl*- into some innocent word

1 In the original sense it has often to be accompanied by *together* to avoid misunderstanding.

2 Cf. the similar use of *something* in 'Where the something are you coming to?' (Pett Ridge, *Lost Property* 167.)

3 'I'm doomed' Corp muttered to himself, pronouncing it in another way. (Barrie, *Tommy and Grizel*, p. 122.) This shows another way of disguising the word *in print*.

4 Cp. also the expression: "Kingsley's struggles with the fourth letter of the alphabet" (a little swearing was thought no blemish in your muscular Christian) *Life of Leshe Stephen* 138.

5 Cf. *silly*, French *benêt*, etc.

6 There exists also a word *blarned*, a blending of *blamed* and *damned* (darned). Cp. also *I swan*, *I snow* and other similar ways of not saying *I swear*.

like *bloody*, which soon became a great favourite with the vulgar and therefore a horror to ears polite, or *blooming*, which had the same unhappy fate in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Few authors would now venture to term their heroines 'blooming young girls' as George Eliot does repeatedly in 'Middlemarch'. Similarly Shakespeare's expression 'the bloody book of law' is completely spoilt to modern readers, and lexicographers now have to render Old English *blodig* and the corresponding words in foreign languages by 'bleeding', 'blood-stained', 'sanguinary' or 'ensanguined'; but even *sanguinary* is often made a substitute for 'bloody' in reporting vulgar speech.

256. This is the usual destiny of euphemisms; in order to avoid the real name of what is thought indecent or improper people use some innocent word. But when that becomes habitual in this sense it becomes just as objectionable as the word it has ousted and now is rejected in its turn. *Privy* is the regular English development of French *privé*; but when it came to be used as a noun for 'a privy place' and in the phrase 'the privy parts', it had to be supplanted in the original sense by *private*, except in 'Privy Council', 'Privy Seal' and 'Privy Purse', where its official dignity kept it alive. The plural *parts* was an ordinary expression for 'talents, mental ability', until the use of the word in veiled language made it impossible.<sup>1</sup>

257. The twentieth century, and especially the time after the Great War, has put a stop to many of the linguistic prohibitions that flourished in the Victorian era. People are not now so afraid of saying *damn* and *bloody* as their ancestors were, and many sexual things are now spoken of quite openly. The present generation shake their heads at the prudery of Boston ladies who would speak of the *limbs* of a piano or their own *benders*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. from America 'He-biddy. — A male fowl. A product of prudery and squeamishness'. Farmer, *Americanisms* p. 298. Cf. also Storm, *Engl. Philologie*, p. 887 (roosterswain).

instead of *legs*.<sup>1</sup> Many absurd names (inexpressibles, inexplicables, indescribables, unmentionables, unwhisperables, my mustn't mention-'em, etc.) were used to avoid the simple word *trousers*, at which no one takes offence nowadays. According to F. T. Elworthy<sup>2</sup> even Somerset peasants thought such names as *bull*, *stallion*, *boar*, *cock*, *ram* indelicate. All this now belongs to ancient history.

256. This volume has in so far been one-sided as it has dealt chiefly with Standard English and has left out of account nearly everything that is not generally accepted as such, apart from here and there a nonce-formation or a bold expression which is not recognized as good English though interesting as showing the possibilities of the language and perhaps in some cases deserving popularity just as well as many things that nobody finds fault with. I have had no space in this little volume for the question how one form of English came to be taken as standard in preference to dialects<sup>3</sup>, nor for chapters on provincialisms, cockneyisms and vulgarisms, on American and Colonial English, on slang<sup>4</sup> and cant<sup>5</sup>, on Pidgin-English and other exotic forms of English<sup>6</sup>, etc. I have also deliberately omitted all the problems connected with that pseudo-historical and anti-educational abomination, the English spelling.<sup>7</sup> At present I shall conclude with a few remarks on what might be called the Expansion of English.

1 Cf. Opie Read, *A Kentucky Colonel*, p. 11 'He was so delicate of expression that he always said limb when he meant leg'.

2 *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 1898.

3 See now "Mankind, Nation, and Individual" (Oslo 1925) ch. III and IV, where the development of common languages in general is discussed.

4 Ibid. ch. VIII.

5 Ibid. ch. X.

6 Cf. *Language* ch. XII on Beach-la-Mar and Pidgin.

7 An historical account of the English sound-system and English spelling may be found in my *Modern English Grammar* I (Heidelberg, Carl Winter, 1909). A later, but unfortunately only half-finished treatment is Karl Luick, *Historische Grammatik der englischen Sprache* (Leipzig 1914—1929).

259. Only two or three centuries ago, English was spoken by so few people that no one could dream of its ever becoming a world language. In 1582 Richard Mulcaster wrote, 'The English tongue is of small reach, stretching no further than this island of ours, nay not there over all'. 'In one of Florio's Anglo-Italian dialogues, an Italian in England, asked to give his opinion of the language, replied it was worthless beyond Dover. Ancillon regretted that the English authors chose to write in English as no one abroad could read them. Even such as learned English by necessity speedily forgot it. As late as 1718, Le Clerc deplored the small number of scholars on the Continent able to read English'.<sup>1</sup> Compare what Portia replies to Nerissa's question about Fauconbridge, the young baron of England (*Merch. I. 2. 72*): 'You know I say nothing to him, for hee understands not me, nor I him: he hath neither Latine, French, nor Italian, and you will come into the Court and sweare that I have a poore pennie-worth in the English. Hee is a proper mans picture. but alas, who can converse with a dumbe show?' In 1714 Veneroni published an Imperial Dictionary of the four chief languages of Europe, that is, Italian, French, German and Latin.<sup>2</sup> Nowadays, no one would overlook English in making even the shortest possible list of the chief languages, because in political, social, and literary importance it is second to none and because it is the mother-tongue of a greater number of human beings than any of its competitors.

260. It would be unreasonable to suppose, as is sometimes done, that the cause of the enormous propagation of the English language is to be sought in its intrinsic merits. When two languages compete, the

<sup>1</sup> Ch. Bastide, *Huguenot Thought in England*. *Journal of Comparative Literature* I (1903) p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Das kaiserliche Spruch- und Wörterbuch, darinnen die 4 europäischen Hauptsprachen, als nemlich: das Italiänische, das Frantzösische, das Teutsche und das Lateinische erklärt werden.

victory does not fall to the most perfect language as such. Nor is it *always* the nation whose culture is superior that makes the nation of inferior culture adopt its language. It sometimes happens in a district of mixed nationalities that the population which is intellectually superior give up their own language because they can learn their neighbours' tongue while these are too dull to learn anything but their own. Thus a great many social problems are involved in the general question of rivalry of languages, and it would be an interesting, but difficult task to examine in detail all the different reasons that have in so many regions of the world determined the victory of English over other languages, European and non-European. Political ascendancy would probably be found in most cases to have been the most powerful influence.

261. However that may be, the fact remains that no other European language has spread over such vast regions during the last few centuries, as shown by the following figures, which represent the number of millions of people speaking each of the languages enumerated<sup>1</sup>:

Year	English	German	Russian	French	Spanish	Italian
1500	4(5)	10	3	10(12)	8 $\frac{1}{2}$	9 $\frac{1}{2}$
1600	6	10	3	14	8 $\frac{1}{2}$	9 $\frac{1}{2}$
1700	8 $\frac{1}{2}$	10	3(15)	20	8 $\frac{1}{2}$	9 $\frac{1}{2}$ (11)
1800	20(40)	30(33)	25(31)	27(31)	26	14(15)
1900	116(123)	75(80)	70(85)	45(52)	44(58)	34(54)
1926	170	80	80	45	65	41

The latest figures that have come to hand, are those in H. L. Mencken, *The American Language*, 4th ed., 1936, p. 592: 'First, let us list those to whom English is their native tongue. They run to about 112,000,000

<sup>1</sup> The numbers given are necessarily approximative only, especially for the older periods. Where my authorities disagree, I have given the lowest and in parenthesis the highest figure. The figures for 1926 are from L. Teyniere's *Appendice* to A. Meillet's *Les Langues dans l'Europe Nouvelle* (Paris 1928).

in the continental United States, to 42,000,000 in the United Kingdom, to 6,000,000 in Canada, 6,000,000 in Australia, 8,000,000 in Ireland, 2,000,000 in South Africa, and probably 8,000,000 in the remaining British colonies and in the possessions of the United States. All these figures are very conservative, but they foot up to 174,000,000. Now add the people who, though born to some other language, live in English-speaking communities and speak English themselves in their daily business, and whose children are being brought up to it — say 13,000,000 for the United States, 1,000,000 for Canada, 1,000,000 for the United Kingdom and Ireland, and 1,000,000 for the rest of the world — and you have a grand total of 191,000,000. Mencken gives the figures for Spanish as 100, for Russian as 80, and for German as 85 millions, and adds: 'Thus English is far ahead of any competitor. Moreover, it promises to increase its lead hereafter, for no other language is spreading so fast or into such remote areas . . . Altogether, it is probable that English is now spoken as a second language by at least 20,000,000 persons throughout the world — very often, to be sure, badly, but nevertheless understandably'.

Whatever a remote future may have in store, one need not be a great prophet to predict that in the near future the number of English-speaking people will increase considerably. It must be a source of gratification to mankind that the tongue spoken by two of the greatest powers of the world is so noble, so rich, so pliant, so expressive, and so interesting as the language whose growth and structure I have been here endeavouring to characterize.

## Phonetic Symbols.

stands before the stressed syllable.  
· indicates length of the preceding vowel.

[a·]	as in <i>alms</i> .	[ʌ]	as in <i>but</i> .
[ai]	as in <i>ice</i> .	[u·]	as in French <i>épouse</i> .
[au]	as in <i>house</i> .	[uw]	as in <i>who</i> ; practically = [u·].
[æ]	as in <i>hat</i> .	[y]	as in French <i>ou</i> .
[ei]	as in <i>hate</i> .	[ɪ]	as in <i>thin</i> .
[ə]	as in <i>about, colour</i> .	[ɒ]	as in <i>this</i> .
[i·]	as in French <i>dise</i> .	[s]	as in <i>seal</i> .
[ij]	as in <i>heat</i> ; practically = [i·].	[z]	as in <i>seal</i> .
[ou]	as in <i>so</i> .	[ʃ]	as in <i>skin</i> ; [tʃ] as in <i>chun</i> .
[ɔ]	as in <i>hot</i> .	[ʒ]	as in <i>vision</i> ; [dʒ] as in <i>gin</i> .
[o·]	as in <i>hall</i> .		

See my *Modern English Grammar* I (1909).

## Abbreviations.

- OE. = Old English ('Anglo-Saxon').  
 ME. = Middle English.  
 ModE. = Modern English.  
 OFr. = Old French.  
 ON. = Old Norse.  
 OHG. = Old High German.  
 NED. = A New English Dictionary, by Murray, Bradley, Craigie, and Onions.

The titles of Shakespeare's plays are abbreviated as in Al. Schmidt's *Shakespeare-Lexikon*, thus *Ado* = *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Gent.* = *The two Gentlemen of Verona*, *H4A* = *First Part of Henry the Fourth*, *Hml.* = *Hamlet*, *R 2* = *Richard the Second*, *Tr.* = *Tempest*, *Tw.* = *Twelfth Night*, *Wiv.* = *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, etc.  
 Acts, scenes, and lines as in the Globe edition.



## INDEX.

References are to the number of the sections.

Only the more important words used as examples are included.

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p> <i>a</i> pronoun 72.<br/>             abbreviations 10, 186.<br/> <i>Abigail</i> 248.<br/> <i>-able</i> 108, 109<br/>             absolute participle 125.<br/>             abstract terms 114ff.<br/>             academies 18<br/>             accent, see stress and tone.<br/>             accident 188ff.<br/> <i>-aceous</i> 123<br/> <i>ache</i> 174<br/> <i>accommodate</i> 229.<br/> <i>action, deed</i> 101.<br/> <i>activity</i> 229<br/>             Addison, on <i>who</i> and <i>which</i> 126<br/>             adjectives, place 85, — Latin and English 131ff, in <i>-ish</i> 165, from compounds 182<br/> <i>adventure</i> 116<br/>             adverbs turned into adjectives 17<br/> <i>advice</i> 116<br/>             Africa, Dutch and English 158.<br/>             agent-nouns 166.<br/> <i>aggravate</i> 119.<br/> <i>aggressive</i> 110.<br/> <i>aid, help</i> 100<br/> <i>aim</i> 111<br/>             Alfred 46, 48, 53, 58, 59.<br/>             alliteration 54, 56.<br/> <i>aims</i> 197<br/> <i>also</i> in Shakespeare and Bacon 230<br/> <i>am</i> (reading) 217.<br/>             ambiguity 140, 178.         </p> | <p>             America, speech-mixture 78, prudery 257.<br/> <i>ana</i> 123.<br/> <i>anchor</i> 32<br/>             Ancrène Riwle, French words in 94.<br/> <i>angel</i> 88, 86.<br/> <i>Angles</i> 34.<br/>             Anglicizing of Scandinavian words 63<br/>             Anglo-Saxon, see Old English.<br/> <i>anti-</i> 124.<br/> <i>April</i> 116.<br/> <i>aquiline</i> 132.<br/>             Arabic loans 155<br/>             archaisms 239<br/>             Arian, see Aryan.<br/> <i>-arious</i> 123<br/> <i>Aristarchy</i> 143 note.<br/>             aristocratic tendencies 82ff, 98, 130, 247<br/>             art, words relating to, 91, 152, 153.<br/>             article, definite 9.<br/>             Aryan family of languages 21, character of primitive Aryan 22.<br/> <i>assassination</i> 229.<br/> <i>-athon</i> 123.<br/> <i>-ative</i> 123<br/>             Australasia 160.<br/>             authors, expressions due to individual authors 243.<br/>             auxiliaries 217f.<br/> <i>avuncular</i> 132<br/> <i>awe</i> 70.<br/> <i>ay</i> 70.         </p> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

- baboo* 156.  
 back-formations 183, 198, 199  
 Baconian theory 230 note.  
*bairn* 64  
*bankrupt* 116, 153  
*Banting* 183.  
*bath, bathe* 173.  
*bathos* 119  
*beet* 32.  
*beg* 183  
 Bell's phonetic nomenclature 138.  
*Beowulf* 40, 54.  
 Bible, influence 214, 241, 250ff  
*birth* 70  
*bit, bite* 175.  
*blend* 64  
*blessed* 255  
*blightly* 163.  
*bloody* 131, 255.  
*bloom* 71.  
*blooming* 255.  
*bonnet* 229.  
*booth* 61.  
*bound* 61, 104.  
*bourne* 238  
*bread* 71.  
*breeches* 201.  
*breed* 175  
*brethren* 201.  
*bridal* 182  
 Britons, see Kelts  
*brood* 175.  
*brother* 201, 234.  
*brush* 177.  
*burgle* 183.  
*busk* 61.  
*butch* 183  
*-by* 60, 61, 74.  
*by-law* 74.  
  
*cab* 186.  
*cad* 183.  
*cafeteria* 154.  
*call* 59.  
*camouflage* 163.  
*cart* 36.  
 Caxton 69, 98.  
 Celts, see Kelts.  
  
*censure* 229.  
*certainly, certitude* 116.  
*ch* 112.  
 Charlie 112.  
*charm* 229.  
 Chaucer 94, 98, 230.  
*chauffeur* 161.  
*cheap* 32.  
*cheer* 113.  
*chick* 56.  
*children* 201.  
 children's words 187.  
*choose, choice* 97.  
 Christianity, influence on  
     language 38ff.  
*church* 38.  
 classical studies, effect on style  
     127, see also Latin and Greek.  
*cleave* 241.  
*climax* 119.  
 clippings of long words 10, 186  
     (183)  
*clothe, dress* 100.  
*co-* 124  
 coined words 161.  
*cold, synonyms* 186.  
*colour and derivatives* 117.  
*companion* 229.  
 compounds, instead of adject-  
     ives 132, nouns 179ff.  
*conchy* 163.  
 conciseness 10.  
*confound* 255  
 consonants 3, groups 5, 6, shift 24,  
     26, in nouns and verbs 173f.  
 continuous forms 217.  
*cook* 32  
*cordial, hearty* 100.  
*cost* 183.  
*cottage, hut* 100.  
*cowl* 39.  
*crave* 74.  
*critic, critique, criticize* 116.  
*croon* 243.  
*cuisine* 88.  
*cupboard* 179.  
*curse* 36.  
 Cynewulf's First Riddle 58.

- daintly* 182.  
*daisy* 179  
*dale* 64, 101.  
*dalliance* 110.  
*damn* and substitutes 255.  
 Danes, Danelaw 58, 61, cf.  
     Scandinavians.  
*danger* 113  
 D'Arblay, Madame, 145.  
*darkle* 183  
*dart* 177.  
 Darwin, on classical studies  
     127  
*de-* 124  
*debt* 116  
 democratic tendencies 247.  
*describe* 116.  
*devil* 38  
 dialects, differences in verbal  
     endings 211.  
 Dickens on a large retinue of  
     words 135.  
*die* 61, 72  
 differentiations 66, 84, 100, 111,  
     112, 116, 172, 189.  
*difficult* 183  
 diminutives 13.  
*disciple* 39  
*dish* 32.  
*do* 218, 235, 236; *doeth*, *doth*  
     215  
*doubt* 113, 116.  
*drat* 254.  
*dream* 71  
*dress*, words relating to, 90  
*dress, dressing* 172.  
*drown* 61.  
 Dryden, French words 95,  
     syntax 126  
*duration* 110.  
 Dutch words 152, in South  
     Africa 158  
*duty* 111.  
*dwelt* 71  
  
*e-* and *in-* (*im-*) confounded 140.  
*earl* 71  
*Easter* 42.  
 ecclesiastical terms, Latin 38ff.,  
     French 86.  
*-ed*, suffix 167.  
*edge* 66.  
*edify* 133.  
*-ee* 111.  
*-eer* 166.  
*egg* 66, 69.  
*eke* 230.  
*'em* 72.  
 Empire, British, 156.  
*-en*, nouns in, 164, verbs in, 167,  
     plural of nouns 195, of verbs  
     211.  
 endings, worn off 7  
 English, masculinity of, 2ff., a  
     world language 258ff.  
*enormous* 119  
*equal* 116.  
*-er* 97, 166.  
 etymology of *pup*, *cad*, *pet* 183,  
     unknown, of many short  
     words 187.  
 euphemisms 254ff.  
 euphony 3ff., 236.  
 Euphuism 228.  
*ex-* 124.  
*example, exemplary* 117.  
*exhibit, exhibition* 172.  
 expanded tenses 217.  
 expansion of English 259ff.  
 eye-words 142.  
  
*f* alternating with *v* 173.  
*fad* 186.  
*faint* 177.  
*family, familiar* 132.  
*feed* 175.  
*feel, feeling* 172.  
*felicity* 99.  
 feminine nouns, formation of,  
     164.  
 feudalism 82.  
*fierce* 103.  
*fitz* 103.  
*flute* 118.  
*foe* 56.  
*folk, people* 100.

- Malapropisms 143  
*manly* and synonyms 133.  
*manslaughter* 133  
*many* 97  
*matin, morning* 100  
 meaning of Shakespearean words 229 ff.  
*means* 200  
 men and women, linguistically different 7, 11, 12, 18.  
 Micawber's style 135  
*mile* 32  
 military words, Scandinavian 73, French 83, others 151.  
*mill* 32.  
 Milton, syntax 126, vocabulary 224, 226, *surround* 243.  
*mine* 188  
*mint* 32  
*Miss* 185.  
 mixed languages 37, 78  
*mob* 186.  
*monger* 32.  
 monosyllabism, force of, 8, 9.  
 monosyllables from various sources 185 ff.  
*mortar* 32  
*move, movement, motion* 172.  
*murder* 133  
 musical terms, Italian 31  
 mutation, plurals 195, verbs 175.  
*mutn*, derivatives 111  
  
 National character 1, 2, 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 28, 50, 73, 92, 93, 148, 155, 247 ff  
 native words as contrasted with loan-words 41 ff.  
*navvy* 186.  
*nay* 68  
 negation 210  
*nephew* 97.  
 neuter, Scandinavian 79, English 193.  
 new words from unknown sources 187.  
*no* 66.  
  
 nominative, Old French, 103.  
 Norman, see French  
 Norse, see Scandinavian.  
 Norwegians 61, cf Scandinavian  
*not* 219.  
*notorious* 229  
 nouns in *-er* 166, and verbs 168 ff., from verbs 169, becoming adjectives 182.  
*now-a-days* 230.  
 number, concord 16, formation of plural 141, 195 ff.  
 number of words 128 ff., in individual vocabularies 224 ff.  
 numerals 204.  
  
 oaths 254 f.  
 obscuration of vowels 26, 139.  
*occupy* 229.  
*-ocracy* 123.  
*odd* 76.  
*of* 191, 193, *of his* 194, *holy of holies* 252.  
*offer* 39.  
 Old English (Anglo-Saxon), relations to other Germanic languages 34, dialects 34, 53, loans from Celtic 36, influence of Christianity 38 ff., loans from Latin and Greek 38 ff., native formations 41 ff., literary capacities 48, poetry 49 ff., synonyms 49, seafaring terms 49, 50, prose 48, 55.  
*-ology* 123.  
*one* 25, 182  
*Orrmulum*, French words 94.  
  
*pander* 243.  
 participle, absolute 125, cf. ing and passive.  
*part* 256  
 passive, English 17, Scandinavian 79, of ing 209, *is being built* 217.  
*Paul Pry* 243.  
*pea, pease* 32, 198.  
*pear* 32.

- Pecksniff* 248  
 pedantry, absence of, 16, 17.  
*peddle* 188  
*pepper* 32.  
*perfect* 116  
 perfect 217.  
 periphrastic tenses 15, 217.  
*pet* 183  
*petty* 84  
 phrases used attributively 17,  
     French 92  
*phthisis* 142  
*pick-pocket* 181  
*picture* 116  
 place-names, Scandinavian 60,  
     translated 157  
*plough* 71.  
*plunder* 157  
 plural, learned formations 141,  
     ordinary 195ff, raised to a  
     second power 201, unchanged  
     202, of verbs 211.  
 poetry, Old English 49, its form  
     54, language of poetry distinct  
     from prose language 53, 285ff.  
 political words, French 82  
*politician* 229  
*ponder* 119.  
*pony* 86  
*pre-* 124  
*premises* 119  
 prepositions, Latin and Greek  
     124, place 126.  
*privy* 256  
*pro-* 124  
 profane language, Act against 255  
 progress in word-formation 164,  
     in grammar 188ff  
 progressive tenses 15, 217.  
 pronouns, Scandinavian 72, 76,  
     English 126, 203, 205, 247ff  
 pronunciation of learned words  
     142  
 proper names, adjectives from,  
     131, 139  
 prose, Old English 48, 55, cf.  
     poetry.  
*provoke* 119.
- prudery 255ff.  
 pseudo-antique formations 240.  
*puisne, puny* 84.  
*punctilium* 122.  
*pup* 183  
 Puritanism 254ff.  
  
*quart* 112.  
 quasi-classical words 121, 122.  
*quince* 103 note.  
  
*raise* 66.  
*re-* 124.  
*rear* 66.  
 re-composition 179.  
 reduplicated perfects 27.  
 relative pronoun, omission 81,  
     126, *who, which, that* 126, 205,  
     *which* 208.  
*reliable* 109.  
 remodelling of French words  
     118, 116.  
*remorse* 229.  
 Renaissance 114.  
*resolution, resolve* 172.  
*retort* 170.  
*rhinoceros* 141 note.  
 rhyme, see rime.  
 rhythm 245.  
*rich* 97.  
*riches* 197.  
 richness of the English language  
     128ff.  
*riding* 74  
 rimes, male and female 8.  
 riming locutions 244  
 Robert of Gloucester 96.  
*rout, route* 112.  
*rove* 183.  
  
*S* in French nominatives 103,  
 voiceless in nouns, voiced  
 in verbs 173, in genitives  
 190ff., in plurals 195ff., *s* for  
*ses* 196; in verbs 211ff.  
*sail* 177.  
*salon, saloon* 112.  
*same* 72.

*Sarah Gamp* 243.

Saxons 34

Scandinavian 57ff., similarity with English 62, Anglicizing 63, parallel forms 65ff., influence on meaning 71, Scandinavian words readily associated with native words 72, spheres of signification 73ff., military words 73, legal terms 74, commonplace words 76, Scandinavian in U S 78, forms of loan-words 79, influence on grammar 80, 81  
scientific nomenclature 114, 121, 138.

*scientist* 121.

scriptural phrases 251.

*seat* 72, 175.

*self* 205.

*sell* 175

*sensible* 110.

sentences, abbreviated 10, used attributively 17.

sex and language 7, 11, 12, 18.

Shakespeare 223ff., range of vocabulary 224ff., religious views 227, individual characters 228, Euphuism 228, meanings different from modern 229, Shylock 231, periods in Shakespeare's life 232, provincialisms 232, boldness of language 233, the First and Second Folios 233, use of new words 234, poetic diction 235, words and phrases due to him 238.

*shall* 80, 217.

*sheer* 229.

*Sherlock Holmes* 243.

Shetland 78 note (p. 73).

Shylock's language 231.

*sidle* 183.

simplification of grammar 80, 164, 168, 168ff.

*sister* 70.

*st* 175.

*size* 133.

*sky* 76 note.

slang 176, 253, 254ff.

*smoke* 177

sobriety 11.

sounds 3, 20, 139, sound-changes in French words 105, 112.

Spanish loans 154.

specializing in primitive vocabularies 51ff.

Spencer, Herbert, on classical studies 127, on long words 137

Spenser, influence on poetic style 239.

split infinitive 219.

*sport* 89.

*squrearchy* 123.

*-ster* 160

*stick, stitch* 174.

*strafe* 168

stress, French and English contrasted 28, in French words 105, in Latin and Greek 139, in nouns and verbs 176, in compounds 182.

stress-shift, Germanic, 25—28.

strong verbs 29, 168.

style, Old English 48, 49, Latin 127, use of synonyms 98, 135, Johnsonese 144ff., journalese 148.

subjunctive 217.

substantives and verbs 168ff.

*succeed, success* 229

suffixes 164ff.

*surround* 243.

swearing 254f

syllable construction 5.

synonyms in Old English 49ff., *heaven, sky* 76 note, colloated 98, 135, French and native 100, Latin and native 133ff., *move, motion, feel, feeling*, etc. 172.

syntax 14, 15, 16, 17, Scandinavian 80, Latin 125f., genitive 191ff., plural 197, 200f.,

- ing 207ff, verbs 217ff, 221,  
 pronouns 205, compounds 182,  
 Shylock's 231, Shakespeare's  
 233.  
 taboo 255ff.  
 take 79  
 telegraphic style 10  
 Tennyson, prefers Saxon words  
 140  
 tense-system 15, 22, 29, 217f.  
 -ter 166.  
 -teria 154  
 th voiceless in nouns, voiced  
 in verbs 168, in third singular  
 211ff., in ordinals 204.  
 that, omission 80, relative  
 pronoun 126.  
 thence 68  
 they, them, their 70, 72.  
 thou 242, 247f.  
 though 70  
 thoughtread 184.  
 thrall 74.  
 Thursday 70.  
 tidings 63  
 till 64.  
 tith 42, 204  
 to as a pro-infinitive 221  
 tone 12  
 town 36 note.  
 trace 103 note  
 trades, names of, 91.  
 tradespeople's courages 162.  
 transpire 119  
 trousers 257  
 trusteeship 111.  
 trustworthy 109.  
 typewrite 184  
 umpte 163  
 unaccountable 109.  
 undemocratic character of clas-  
 sical words 143.  
 uninhabitable 140.  
 usance 231  
 value-stressing 26ff, 105  
 venture 116  
 verbal noun 171ff, see ing  
 verbs, strong 29, 188, weak  
 29, form of French, 104, in  
 -en 166, relation to nouns  
 168ff, forms 211ff.  
 verdict 116  
 virtuals 116  
 vocabulary, fulness of, 18, 128ff,  
 individual 224ff  
 voiced and voiceless consonants  
 in verbs and nouns 97, 173.  
 vowel-differences between nouns  
 and verbs 175.  
 vowel-sounds obscured 26, 139.  
 voyage 113.  
 wag 229  
 want 72.  
 wapentake 74  
 War, the Great, 163  
 wash 52  
 weak verbs 29.  
 weird 238.  
 whence 68  
 which 126, 203, 205.  
 who 205, for *he who* 125, Humble  
 Petition of *who* and *which* 126  
 whole 66.  
 will 80, 217  
 window 75.  
 wine 82.  
 wire, wireless 138, 177  
 women, language of, 7, 11, 12,  
 18.  
 word-formation 162ff  
 word-order 14, 189, 219, ad-  
 jectives after nouns 85.  
 Wulfstan 48, 55.  
 -y 13.  
 Yankee 184  
 you 189, 242, 247f.  
 zepp 163.

References are to sections, not to pages.

